Niles takes down St. Joseph
Page B1

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Niles Star

SEPTEMBER 6-7, 2025 A publication of The Herald-Palladium **$4**

Paxton Media Group acquires Leader Publications

STAFF REPORT

NILES — Leader Publications has been a bastion of news and information for Berrien and Cass counties for decades.

While much has changed over the years, its dedication to swift and truthful reporting has never wavered. Change is inevitable and for the first time since 1988, Leader Publications has changed hands.

Boone Newsmedia, Inc., owners of Leader Publications headquartered in Niles, Michigan, has announced the sale of the Niles Daily Star, Dowagiac Daily News and The Leader to Paxton Media Group, according to John Cribb of Cribb & Associates, who represented BNI and the Boone family in the transaction. Terms were not disclosed.

"Leader Publications has been an important part of BNI for more than three decades," BNI Senior Vice President Catherine Boone Hadaway said. "BNI's founder and my father, Jim Boone, loved visiting the beautiful town of Niles, and took a lot of pride in the weekly newspapers and shopper produced there. We are thankful to our employees, our readers and the communities served for their longstanding support of the paper."

Paxton Media Group is a diversified media company with interests in newspapers, printing and broadcasting and is still owned and managed by third- and fourth-generation members of the Paxton family.

"We are very pleased to be selected by the Boone family to assume stewardship for these publications," said Jamie Paxton, President & CEO of Paxton Media Group. "We believe strongly in the importance of local journalism and intend to build on the award-winning reputation of these newspapers."

PMG owns and operates several Michiana newspapers including the Herald-Palladium, Harbor Country News, South Haven Tribune and The Elkhart Truth.

"Adding Leader Publications to our already strong presence in Michiana clearly shows our commitment to providing news and information in this region," said PMG's Group President David Holgate.

In March 1886, Darius B. Cook issued the first copy of what we now know as The Niles Star. It was the first daily newspaper to be published in Berrien County. James Heddon's family, who also made the first fishing lures, founded the Dowagiac News in February 1897. Leader Publications Publisher Rich Cains and Managing Editor Maxwell Harden will continue in their roles following the acquisition.

"While the sale is bittersweet, BNI President and CEO Steve Stewart and I are very pleased Jamie Paxton and Paxton Media Group will continue to be the stewards of these community newspapers," Hadaway added. "Paxton has a reputation for taking care of their employees, their franchises and the communities they serve. We could not be more pleased for Leader Publications and its staff. We look forward to many successful years for Paxton in Niles."

A five-month odyssey

SMC grad hikes Appalachian Trail

By JOHN EBY
Southwestern Michigan College

Photo provided

Dowagiac native Brooks Diamond hiked the Appalachian Trail in five months.

DOWAGIAC — Diamond is the hardest naturally occurring material known, which robotics control engineer Brooks Diamond (Class of 2014) certainly proved hiking the Appalachian Trail.

Diamond, who grew up in Dowagiac, was hired right out of SMC by JR Automations in St. Joseph and in January 2020 followed his job to Nashville, where its headquarters is located. He's traveled all over the globe for his job.

"We have customers all over the U.S. and the world," Diamond said. "The division I'm currently with in Nashville focuses mainly on medical, government and aerospace. The Michigan divisions handle more automotive, while the Utah division designs amusement park rides, such as roller coasters."

A controls engineer designs, develops and maintains systems to control dynamic processes and machinery, ensuring they behave predictably and optimally, often using mathematical modeling and software tools.

"Controls engineers 'breathe life' into the machines so they function as designed. Mechanical engineers create the mechanical parts of the systems, while electrical/controls engineers design the electrical schematics and write code to ensure they behave in a repeatable and predictable way. There's a lot of data acquisition, data tracking and adherence to tight tolerances and customer specifications involved," he said. "Our company functions as one large team, divided into smaller project teams. The size of each project team depends on the scope and complexity of the project, ranging from just a few to many people."

"I work for the same company where I did my internship right out of college in Stevensville 11 years ago," Diamond said. "At that time, the company was called Dane System. Now it's JR Automation – a Hitachi Group Company. We were acquired by Hitachi about six years ago."

"I've also had the opportunity to travel with the company. About five months ago, I was in Florence, Italy, and in a few weeks I'll be in Dublin, Ireland. I transferred from Michigan to our Nashville division five years ago, so I'm working on becoming a Tennessean while still retaining my Michigander heart."

"I love working at JR Automation – it's such a great company to work for," Diamond said. "That's why I transferred rather than looking at other companies. They've been really good to me over the years, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to work there. I'm always learning new things, too. The innovative automation solutions we design and build as a team make it truly enjoyable."

"We typically design, build, wire, program and debug automated systems at our facility. Once we're ready, we conduct a Factory Acceptance Test (FAT) with the customer. After receiving their approval, we dismantle the system, install it at their facility and then perform the Site Acceptance Test (SAT)."

Hiking from Georgia to Maine

Diamond's employer granted him a leave of absence to pursue his quest.

"I hiked the entire Appalachian Trail – the entire 2,198.4 miles from Georgia to Maine," said Diamond. "I even completed the approach trail, another 8.8 miles, but who's counting, right?"

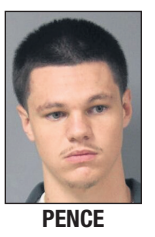
"It was, to say the least, an incredible experience and, at the same time. The hardest thing I've ever done. It took me just over five months to complete. I'm grateful

See **DIAMOND**, page A3

Murder suspect waives preliminary hearing

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Star

NILES — The man accused in a 2022 murder at an apartment complex in Niles has waived his right to a preliminary hearing. The case against Rease David Pence has now been set for an early December trial in Berrien County Trial Court.



PENCE

Pence, now 20, formerly of Dowagiac and Niles, will next be in court on Oct. 15 for a case conference and Nov. 17 for a status conference before the jury trial which is scheduled to start Dec. 3. He remains in the Berrien County Jail on no bond.

Several witnesses had been set to testify Tuesday morning at the Niles courthouse including police investigating the incident and eyewitnesses to the events of May 12, 2022 at the Arbor Trails apartment complex on North Fifth Street in Niles.

The court file showed that police received numerous calls of a shooting that night. Witnesses reported that four teenagers were walking outside one of the buildings when a pickup truck pulled up and a person wearing a red ski mask got out. He confronted the four teens and a fistfight ensued before he allegedly pulled out a gun and fired three times.

The court records indicated that a 14-year-old juvenile, Gavin Blankenship, was shot in the incident

See **PENCE**, page A3

Louise Wrege / For the Star

Berrien RESA Superintendent Eric Hoppstock, right, speaks about the Berrien Talent Collaborative while Lake Michigan College President Trevor Kubatzke looks on during a 2024 news conference.

LMC president announces retirement

Kubatzke to vacate post next year, college kicks off search

By LOUISE WREGE
For the Star

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Lake Michigan College President Trevor Kubatzke may be retiring, but he'll still be around the campus for a while.

Kubatzke announced his resignation Tuesday and marked his last day for Dec. 31, 2026, in an effort to allow the college's board of trustees time to find his successor.

"After much reflection and with a profound sense of gratitude, I am writing to formally announce my retirement as president of Lake Michigan College," Kubatzke stated in a letter to the board. "This decision does not come lightly, as my time here has been among the most meaningful and rewarding chapters of my professional and personal life."

Since Kubatzke started leading the college in April of 2017, the institution has gone through a period of significant growth and transformation.

"The most meaningful moments for me have never been about statistics or milestones," Kubatzke said in a news release. "They have been found in the laughter echoing through the halls during Welcome Week, the determination in the eyes of a returning adult learner, the heartfelt conversations with faculty about teaching and learning, and the triumphs of students walking across the stage at commencement."

Under his tenure, the college has expanded its dual enrollment programs with local high schools, developed apprenticeships with area employers and enhanced collaborations with four-year institutions.

See **KUBATZKE**, page A3

Today's obituaries Pages A4-A5

Rickie Nelson Gunn · Joan Rae Atherton · Tracy Patricia Morton · Tamara Susan Atherton · Walter Robert Whitmeyer Jr. · Keith Alan Abiney · Albert R. Yob · Cathy Carnes · Alan Lee Dutton

Frankly Tips and quips, **A2**

Inside today

Sports	B1	Puzzles	B3
Comics	B4	Classifieds	B5

FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7702 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ Why does Trump always act like a lap dog around Putin? Does Putin know what is in the Epstein file?

■ Russia's population is 150 million. They have to import soldiers from North Korea, criminal and paid mercenaries to fight their wars. Ukraine has a population of 38 million and have proven themselves to be courageous, ingenious and brave.

■ Chicago had 30 shootings over the weekend. Oh yeah, they got it under control.....

■ Republicans are lying and cheating their way to keep the House and Senate.

■ San Francisco was one of our nation's greatest cities. Now it's the largest homeless shelter. Tax, tax, tax..... Newsome should be ashamed.

■ While our incompetent authoritarian leader moves National Guard troops around like toy soldiers, China, Russia and now, India held a summit to plot our demise. I bet they forgot to show that on Fox.

■ I'm really sick and tired of the GOP stating "family values" as the reason for being against same sex marriage. 50 percent of marriages end in divorce. How many of them have been married three times like our President?

■ Support the high school teams. The kids and coaches work hard and need your attendance.

■ Great news on Caleb! You have made us so proud. Have a great season.

WEATHER

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 65. Northwest wind 5 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Sunday night: Mostly clear, with a low around 43.

Monday: Sunny, with a high near 71.

Monday night: Mostly clear, with a low around 46.

Tuesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 77.

Tuesday night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 53.

Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 78.

Wednesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 52.

Thursday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 75.

FRIGHTFUL FUN

Niles Scream Park opens for 2025 season

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A haunted house, a freaky funeral and a fearsome frozen refuge are just a few of the horrific sights awaiting guests at one of Niles' most popular fall attractions.

The Niles Scream Park, 855 Mayflower Rd., Niles, opened its gates for its 52nd season and organizers and volunteers are ready to scare the "yell" out of guests. For the remainder of September, the park will be open Fridays and Saturdays. Beginning on October 10th, the Park will be open all weekends (Friday, Saturday and Sunday). New for 2025, the park will host Almost Actorless events on Thursday Oct. 30 and Friday, Oct. 31, an Adults Only 18+ Night on Saturday, Nov. 1. Two final "black-out" nights will be hosted Nov. 7-8.

The park boasts 44-acres filled with frightful sights that are rebuilt each year. The park is recognized both regionally and nationally as a top haunted house, having been recognized six years in a row by Haunted Attraction Magazine as a "Top 31 Must-See Haunted Attraction."

For those with the courage to tour all seven attractions, here is the line-up for 2025:

Niles Haunted House – The park's largest and most popular attraction takes guests on a tour filled with themed rooms and a variety of scares.

The Lodge – In the midst of a blizzard, guests must navigate and escape a refuge turned frozen nightmare.

Dust to Dust – Guests are invited to explore Cravensworth Mortuary, a funeral home that offers more than just a final resting place.

Field of Screams – One of the park's most popular attractions, the Field of Screams guides guests through a maze featuring cannibals, a cemetery, a ghost town and more.

Wicked Woods – A secluded forest shrouded in mystery and teeming with unspeakable horrors.

Hooded – For adults 18 and over only, guests are blindfolded and actors can touch them as they move through a scary attraction.

Mini Escape Rooms – Four five-minute escape rooms will be available to give guests a fast-paced experience.

In addition to the attractions, the midway features several food concessions and the gift shop will let you shop till you drop for the latest Halloween merchandise. The Scream Park's new photo-op system will provide guests with several options of pictures to purchase to commemorate their experiences and there also is the Dead Man's Axe throwing game for those who like adventure and a challenge.

The Niles Scream Park is a non-profit community project that uses approximately 200 volunteers per night to staff its various attractions. These volunteers represent more than 65 Michiana area community and school organizations. Since 1996, more than $2.5 million has been donated to local and national non-profit organizations and to the Niles Scream Park-funded college scholarships for students at Niles, Brandywine, Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg and Penn High Schools.

More information on prices, times and dates of operation can be obtained by visiting the Niles Scream Park web site at www.haunted.org or calling (269) 687-FEAR.

Homeless man gets prison time for probation violation

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Star

RIOS CONRAD GAGLIARDO KELLY VANZANT

CASSOPOLIS — Area residents were sentenced to prison, jail and probation Friday in sentencings in Cass County Circuit Court at the Cass County Law & Courts Building.

Devin Michael Rios, 28, pleaded guilty to attempted receiving, concealing or possession of a stolen motor vehicle and was sentenced to one year to 30 months in prison with credit for 80 days served. He must pay $1,548 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Aug. 21, 2020 near Edwardsburg. Police attempted to pull him over on what turned out to be a stolen motorcycle. He ran from police and later caught that same day.

Since then he has been sentenced for a number of offenses in St. Joseph County, Indiana and is currently in the Putnamville Correction Center in Greencastle, Indiana. He is scheduled to be released in those cases next April.

Cass County Circuit Court Judge Mark Herman noted that Rios pleaded guilty in 2022 but failed to appear for his sentencing in January, 2023. Rios has since then spent three years incarcerated in Indiana.

"You're still young, but you can get old real quick behind bars," Judge Herman said. "You absconded from your sentencing when the agreement then was for no more jail, that makes no sense."

Another area resident was also sentenced to prison.

Trent Aaron Conrad, 23, homeless but formerly of Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to violating his probation from a Nov. 8, 2024 sentence for second-degree criminal sexual conduct and was sentenced Friday to 36 months to 15 years in prison with credit for 104 days served. His probation was revoked.

The incident occurred in March 2024 in Dowagiac.

Defense attorney Greg Feldman said that one of Conrad's main issues is homelessness and not being able to live in certain locations due to his CSC conviction. His CSC conviction has also kept him from being eligible for probation programs.

Judge Herman noted that Conrad should have been aware that he was on thin ice when he was sentenced last fall as the sentencing guidelines then were for prison. The judge pointed out that Conrad tested positive for drugs and had other violations since being on probation.

"I don't think the court has any alternative but to revoke your probation," the judge told Conrad.

A Dowagiac man was among those sentenced to probation Friday.

Kyle Christopher Gagliardo, 40, of Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine as a habitual offender and was sentenced to two years probation, 365 days in jail with credit for 140 days served and $2,768 in fines and costs.

He also had his probation revoked from a 2024 drug conviction and was sentenced to 365 days in jail with credit for 207 days served. He violated his probation by testing positive for meth and having meth in his possession.

The current incident occurred April 12, 2025 in Dowagiac. Police responded to a call of people looking into the window of a home. Gagliardo was found with a knife and meth in his pocket and also had an outstanding warrant out of Van Buren County.

"You need to appreciate the work of the attorneys on reaching this agreement for a one year in jail," Judge Herman said. "I will accept it. I also think probation is appropriate, you don't get off probation by violating probation … I want you to have structure so you don't end up in prison."

"You could be going to prison today," he added. "If you can't abide by probation this time, don't be shocked or surprised that a trip to Jacksno isn't in your future for two years or more. You're 40 years old, it's time to grow up and put this nonsense behind you."

Paul David Kelly, 56, homeless, pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine and was sentenced to two years probation, credit for 61 days served and $2,268 in fines and costs. If successful on probation, the charge will be reduced to use of meth.

He also pleaded guilty to violating terms from an earlier failure to pay child support conviction and had that probation extended for an additional year and credit for 100 days served. He still owes over $20,000 in child support.

The meth incident occurred June 30 near Niles. He initially refused to step out of his vehicle when he was stopped and gave a false name. Police found meth in his vehicle as well as $1,400 in cash.

"You need to thank the prosecutor and your attorney for this agreement or you could be going to prison today," Judge Herman said. "I don't know how you meet someone doing meth and fall in love, that's a no brainer to me to end the relationship. I can't believe you love somebody so much you let them continue to ruin their own life and then turn around and say I'm going to destroy my own life too."

Jerry Lee Vanzant, 64, of Granger, pleaded guilty to use of methamphetamine and was sentenced to 12 months probation, credit for two days served and $2,335 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred May 19 near Edwardsburg. Police stopped him because he had a forged license plate sticker and did not have insurance or registration for his vehicle.

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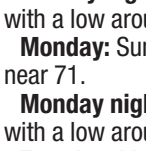
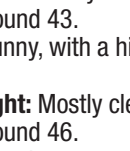
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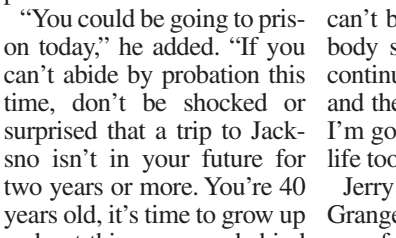
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Cass Family Clinic opens Dowagiac facility

SUBMITTED

Photo provided

Cass Family Clinic staff and board members gather as Board President Tracy Hertsel (front center) cuts the ribbon on the organization's new Dowagiac clinic, located at 57392 M-51 S., on Aug. 29.

DOWAGIAC — The Cass Family Clinic held a ribbon cutting Friday to celebrate the opening of a new clinic in Dowagiac, located at 57392 M-51 S. This marks Cass Family Clinic's third location, joining clinics in Cassopolis and Niles.

The Dowagiac clinic includes primary medical care and a pharmacy with drive-through services, which is expected to open later this fall. It is managed by two medical providers: Family Physician Dr. Sabrina Cole and Physician Assistant Katie Basha, and employs about 15 Cass Family Clinic employees. It will serve an estimated 2,400 patients in the area.

"We're pleased to welcome such an experienced medical team to serve the Dowagiac community, including Katie Basha, who many local patients will remember from her previous practice here," said Joe Gavan, CEO of Cass Family Clinic. "Dr. Sabrina Cole and Katie Basha bring both skill and passion to their work, and we are confident patients will benefit greatly from their care."

Designed by Barker Nestor Architecture + Design of Chicago, construction for the 4,000-square-foot Dowagiac facility in the former Community Care of Dowagiac building began in March of this year.

"With the opening of our Dowagiac clinic, Cass Family Clinic is bridging convenient access to healthcare and pharmacy services for patients between Cassopolis and Niles," said Tracy Hertsel, Cass Family Clinic board president. "We believe this new healthcare location will be a benefit for all Cass County residents."

Medical hours for Cass Family Clinic's Dowagiac Clinic are:

- Monday and Wednesday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Tuesday and Thursday: 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Closed: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday

The Dowagiac clinic's pharmacy is expected to open in October or November.

Milton Township hires interim electrical inspector

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

MILTON TOWNSHIP — The Milton Township Board of Trustees addressed financial matters, approved a new interim electrical inspector and discussed a property issue during its Aug. 19 meeting at Milton Township Hall.

The board approved several financial motions presented by Treasurer Rachel Plank. Among these was the approval of the current Blue Cross Blue Shield renewal. The board also voted to remove Robert Benjamin from the township's bank accounts at First Source, Honor Credit Union, and United Federal Credit Union.

Additionally, the investment and depository policy was updated to include several new financial institutions, including Circle Federal Credit Union, Country Heritage Credit Union and Old National Bank. The annual audit was also approved as presented.

In other financial business, the township's budget was approved by a vote of 3-2, with Trustees Rich Mullin and Rachel Plank voting against the motion. Financial reports showed that the First Source Account was closed and the funds were moved to the United Federal Credit Union. The board also approved a list of checks for payment, including those for Blue Cross Blue Shield, ACD.Net and Johnny Hamilton.

In further business, the board appointed Dave Gongwer as the interim electrical inspector. The appointment was made because the current inspector, Johnny Hamilton, is out for medical reasons. Gongwer will serve in the role until Hamilton returns or a new inspector is appointed.

Trustees also approved expenses for a Michigan Townships Association (MTA) Clerk Retreat, with a budget not to exceed $1,200.

The board also discussed a recent incident at a property on Redfield Street, where police took action and the homeowner was jailed. The board discussed possible follow-up actions and will continue to monitor the situation.

The next township meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 16, at the township hall.

DIAMOND

From page A1

that I was able to do it and be one of the roughly 25 percent who attempt it each year and succeed. It definitely boosted both my confidence and my resume.

"Looking back, I believe that working at JR Automation helped me more on the trail than I initially thought. Many things didn't go as planned, and I had to figure them out on a day-to-day basis. Problem-solving when things don't go according to plan and overcoming hurdles is part of the job at JR Automation – whether you're in engineering, build or the electrical department. It was the same on the trail. I had to determine where to camp, how much food I had left, and how far it was to the next town. All the while it rained for days on end. I would plan, and sometimes something wouldn't work out. But it never bothered me as much as it did others. I learned to take a different approach to get where I needed to be. I owe a lot of what I learned on the trail to the experience I've gained at JR Automation."

Training for a five-month odyssey

"I trained as much as I could here in Tennessee. I joined a backpacking club and hiked the mountains as much as possible. It helped, but unless you're hiking every day – up and down mountains all day long – it's hard to fully prepare for long-distance backpacking. That said, I still highly recommend training if you can. Using a stair stepper and hiking as often as possible will help you avoid early injuries on the hike.

"JR wanted to help me out and gave me a leave of absence. They wanted me to come back after I finished. I'm incredibly grateful. I thought I was going to get the boot with a 'don't let the door hit you on the way out,' but it was the opposite. It shows what kind of company JR is and another reason why I love working there."

Diamond has not seen the 2014 Reese Witherspoon movie "Wild" based on a real woman who solo-hiked the Pacific Crest Trail in 1995, but he'd heard of it.

"I did read A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson. That was a funny one. Anyway, there were many people on the trail doing it for personal reasons. We all had our reasons – some were more complex than others. Some did it purely for the challenge. I met all sorts of people out there – some who actually lived on the trail. They would work at hostels for a while to earn some income and have a free place to stay for a while, then they'd head back out on the trail. I met doctors, lawyers, scientists, and executives from Fortune 500 companies – all walking the trail for their own personal reasons.

"Despite our diverse backgrounds, we all had one shared goal, and that goal brought everyone closer to make it to the top of Mount Katahdin in Maine."

Big dreams sprout n small towns

"It's amazing how small towns like my hometown, Dowagiac, have connections to such fascinating pieces of history and inspiring achievements! Five Titanic survivors – that's worth seeing when I'm at Pigeon Forge again, especially with all the Titanic exhibits they have there.

"Seeing people from your hometown make it to the NFL, whether as a player or a cheerleader, is incredibly motivating. It's a reminder that big dreams can sprout from even the smallest places. Makes you wonder what other untold stories Dowagiac holds, doesn't it?"

Diamond, who is getting married in July and has been busy house-hunting, grew up five minutes from campus on M-62, past Lindy's.

"I had friends who attended SMC, so it made sense to at least check it out – and I'm glad it did. I really enjoyed my experience at SMC. I still keep in touch with some of my classmates, and a couple of them still work at JR Automation. I graduated a little later than my original high school class – around 2007 or 2008, I think.

SMC won out over Oklahoma

"At the time, I was working at National-Standard in Niles for five years," he said. "I've heard they've since closed (on April 5, 2024). Eventually, I realized I wanted to do something different with my life. Things worked out in a surprising way. My department at National-Standard was being relocated to Oklahoma, and the company announced layoffs. I was given the choice to move to Oklahoma or take the layoff. I decided to take the layoff and hit the books at SMC. Looking back, I'm so glad I made that choice. I really enjoy what I do now. There's a sense of gratification every time I get to solve a problem with the team. It's been a truly rewarding journey to get here."

Diamond was taking prerequisites and initially considered studying biology, but he wasn't entirely sure about his path.

"I kept walking past the robotics classroom and was intrigued by the robot sitting inside. I've always been fascinated by electricity as well," he said. "One day, I stopped in and Mike McGowan was there. I asked him about the class and what it was all about. I decided to take a few classes and was immediately hooked. I really enjoyed working with the instructors, especially Nathan Kramb, the welding/robotics instructor at the time. He was an incredible mentor during courses, and I learned so much from him."

KUBATZKE

From page A1

Kubatzke also helped modernize the Benton Harbor and South Haven campuses for students be more successful by implementing new academic pathways and expanding support services. Kubatzke said he plans to continue supporting LMC in various capacities after his retirement.

"While I look forward to retirement and the new adventures that await, I will never be far from the mission that has defined my career," Kubatzke said in the release. "I remain committed to community college education and will continue to support and champion this great institution in any way I can."

A presidential search

The board of trustees has retained the Pauly Group of Chicago to assist in the presidential search process.

According to the release, the Pauly Group is recognized as one of the leading academic search consulting firms in the nation, specializing exclusively in senior administrative searches for community and technical colleges.

The board will hold an open forum next week to allow residents to share their perspective on the qualities and priorities needed in the next LMC president. The forum will be led by Angela Provart, president of the Pauly Group, and take place from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Sept. 11 at the Benton Harbor Campus, Todd Center, Room 1413.

"We are committed to conducting a thorough and inclusive search process to find the next leader who will continue building upon Lake Michigan College's strong foundation," LMC Board Chair Joan Smith said in the release. "Dr. Kubatzke's early announcement demonstrates his continued commitment to the institution and provides us with the time needed to identify the best candidate to lead LMC into the future."

Kubatzke effectively replaced Jennifer Spielvogel, who was fired in May of 2016 after three months amid charges of unauthorized spending and unprofessional behavior. She sued LMC in federal court, with both sides settling in January of 2018 for $145,000. While the board of trustees looked for a new leader in 2016, former LMC President Bob Harrison returned temporarily to his old job.

Contact: lwrege@TheHP.com, 932-0361, Twitter: @HPWrege

PENCE

From page A1

and later died from his injuries. Pence was identified as a person of interest in the investigation.

Police interviewed Pence's half brother who said he had been with Pence and two others earlier that day and that they had been smoking marijuana. The half brother did not go to the Niles apartment complex but said Pence returned that night and said he had shot someone and they had to get rid of the truck.

Police were also able to obtain a Snapchat video shot by another person who was in the truck at the time of the shooting that showed Pence driving the car and wearing a red ski mask. Police later discovered that the truck had been stolen the previous day from the Oak Manor area in Niles Township.

Pence had not been arraigned on murder and other charges until last month. He was convicted after this incident of the 2022 murders of two Niles women in northern St. Joseph County just south of the state line and is serving a prison sentence in that case.

Pence faces four counts in this case: one count each of open murder, carrying a concealed weapon, receiving, concealing or possession of a stolen vehicle and the use of a firearm in the commission of a felony.

He faces a maximum of life in prison if convicted of murder, five years on the weapon and stolen vehicle charges and a consecutive two year term for the felony firearm.

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Silver Creek Township adopts public safety millage

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

SILVER CREEK TOWNSHIP — The Silver Creek Township Board of Trustees unanimously voted to adopt a public safety millage and approved several special assessment rolls during its monthly meeting on Aug. 13.

Following a public hearing, the board adopted Resolution 25-17, approving a special assessment of 3.0 mills to fund public safety services. Supervisor Braman noted that the millage would cover the costs of police, fire and ambulance coverage, which are all third-party contracted services.

Volunteer fire chiefs Anthony Lozada and Paul Hartman presented on the need for increased funding. Chief Lozada highlighted the need for future capital improvement plans and new gear while Chief Hartman mentioned the need to pay volunteers to help with recruitment. The board's decision will collect $995,211.72 from the millage. Of that amount, $400,000 will be allocated to each of the two fire departments, with the remaining $195,211.72 designated for the ambulance contract.

Both fire chiefs also reminded residents to park completely off the streets to ensure narrow roads are clear for emergency vehicles.

The board also approved several special assessments for lake weed control. A motion was carried to reduce the assessment for the Dewey Lake Weed Control District by 25 percent to avoid a surplus. A special assessment was also approved for Little Crooked Lake while the board determined that an assessment would not be necessary this year for Magician Lake due to a current surplus in the account.

In other business, the board approved bills and claims, including payroll, totaling $60,678.78. Township Clerk Jess Honn reported on the upcoming Nov. 4 election, noting that the ballot will include a countywide millage and millages for the Dowagiac and Eau Claire school districts. Honn reminded voters that those on the permanent ballot list will receive their ballots in September, while others will need to apply for an absentee ballot.

Old Rugged Cross Church to host revival

Events at historic church are slated for Sept. 14-17

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Photo provided

(From left): Pastor Justin Shepard of the Michiana Church of Christ in Dowagiac; Pastor Jeff Whittaker of Michiana Christian Embassy in Niles; Pastor Lanny Duffel formerly of the Arden United Methodist Church; and Pastor Dan Greegor of the Sumnerville Bible Baptist Church.

POKAGON TOWNSHIP — The Old Rugged Cross Church will host a revival from Sunday, Sept. 14, through Wednesday, Sept. 17. The services will be led by four local pastors and will be held at 7 p.m. each night.

The pastors are Justin Shepard of the Michiana Church of Christ in Dowagiac, Jeff Whittaker of Michiana Christian Embassy in Niles, Lanny Duffel, formerly of the Arden United Methodist Church, and Dan Greegor of the Sumnerville Bible Baptist Church. The four have led the last two Good Friday services at the church.

The Old Rugged Cross Church, formally known as The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Pokagon, is a historic church located at 61041 Vermont St. in Pokagon Township.

The church is known for featuring the first performance of the hymn "The Old Rugged Cross," a popular hymn written in 1912 by evangelist and song-leader George Bennard.

According to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, the building was erected in 1862 as a hop barn before being purchased by the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Pokagon in 1876. The church purchased the building and enlarged and remodeled it into a church.

In 1913, Bennard was asked by his friend and the church's pastor, Leroy Bostwick, to help with the church's revival meetings at the church. It was there that the church's five-member choir performed Bennard's "The Old Rugged Cross" for the first time the hymn was performed in public.

Little Bucks Kid Care opens in Buchanan

By MAXWELL HARDEN
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BUCHANAN — A new child care center has opened its doors in downtown Buchanan.

Little Bucks Kid Care is now open and enrolling children ages 5 to 12 at its downtown location at 101 Days Ave.

The facility, owned and operated by Little Bucks Childcare LLC, offers care for before and after school, as well as for half days, full days off, snow days and breaks. The center is open from 6:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., enrolls 20 children and provides busing from the center to school and back.

Full-time care, which includes all the previously listed services, is available for $175 per week. Part-time care, for before and after school only, is $125 per week. Summer care is available at a separate rate. Little Bucks Kid Care also accepts state-paid MDHHS vouchers.

For more information, visit littlebuckschildcare.com.

Edwardsburg man injured in crash

By MAXWELL HARDEN
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MASON TOWNSHIP — An Edwardsburg man was injured Thursday in a single vehicle crash in Mason Township, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 9:35 a,m. Thursday, Cass County Sheriff's Office deputies responded to a single vehicle crash on Mason Road near Gordon Street in Mason Township.

The investigation showed that 78-year-old Larry Rentfrow, of Edwardsburg, was westbound on Mason Street when his vehicle left the roadway and hit multiple trees before overturning. Rentfrow was trapped in his vehicle. Deputies and assisting agencies were able to extract Rentfrow.

Rentfrow was transported by SEPSA Ambulance to South Bend Memorial Hospital for injuries sustained in the accident. Assisting Agencies: SEPSA Ambulance, SEPSA Fire Department. Alcohol or drugs do not appear to be a factor in this crash.

Rentfrow was wearing his seatbelt.

Photo provided

Pictured from left: Nikki Buhrdorf, senior people strategy partner; Heather Hooley, senior people strategy partner; Jonathan Jones, learning and leadership development consultant; Julio Cruz Reyes, equal access and belonging program director; and Sue Mummert, EESO specialist.

Forbes names Notre Dame top employer in Indiana for 2025

SUBMITTED

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — The University of Notre Dame has been named the top employer in Indiana by Forbes in its 2025 ranking of "America's Best Employers by State."

The recognition follows Notre Dame's repeated appearances on Forbes' national and state lists, including being ranked the No. 1 large employer in the United States earlier this year and the best employer in the education sector in Indiana in 2024. This continued recognition reflects a clear pattern of excellence in how the University supports and invests in its people.

"We are humbled and grateful to once again be recognized by Forbes as the best place to work in our home state of Indiana," said Executive Vice President Shannon Cullinan. "This honor is a tribute to the dedicated faculty and staff who bring Notre Dame's mission to life each day, and to the ways in which we strive to care for one another as a community."

Notre Dame ranked No. 1 out of 75 employers in Indiana. The Forbes rankings are based on surveys of more than 160,000 employees across industries, evaluating employers' commitment to workplace culture, compensation and benefits.

At Notre Dame, that commitment is reflected in industry-leading benefits designed to support the whole person, from health and wellness to professional development and spiritual growth. Initiatives such as dedicated childcare centers, robust retirement and health care programs and an on-campus employee medical facility underscore the University's ongoing dedication to its people.

"This honor is a reminder that when we invest in our people, we all thrive together. It challenges us to maintain focus on how we support, reward and celebrate the extraordinary faculty and staff who make Notre Dame what it is."

HEATHER CHRISTOPHERSEN
Vice president, Notre Dame Human Resources

"This honor is a reminder that when we invest in our people, we all thrive together," said Vice President for Notre Dame Human Resources Heather Christophersen. "It challenges us to maintain focus on how we support, reward and celebrate the extraordinary faculty and staff who make Notre Dame what it is."

Notre Dame's continued recognition by Forbes highlights the University's enduring commitment to its people, Christophersen said. To be named Indiana's best employer is especially meaningful, she said, as it reflects not only the strength of the University's workplace culture, but also the deep connection it shares with local communities. As the University continues to grow in impact and reach, it remains dedicated to ensuring that Notre Dame is a place where people are supported, inspired and proud to belong.

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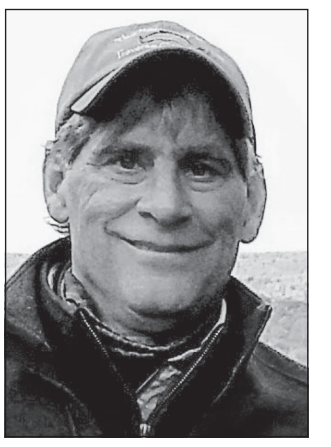
OBITUARIES

Keith Abiney

February 28, 1963 – August 7, 2025



In Loving Memory of Keith Alan Abiney

On August 7, 2025, surrounded by love, Keith Alan Abiney laid down his tools, set aside his fishing rod, and took his final journey home. He was 62 years old.

Born on February 28, 1963, to Patrick and Doris Abiney, Keith lived a life full of purpose, passion, and quiet strength. He proudly served his country in the United States Army, carrying the discipline, courage, and loyalty he learned there into every part of his life.

Keith had a gift for working with his hands and his heart. He loved to fly fish in peaceful streams, to walk the fields in search of birds with the crisp air in his lungs, to coax life from the soil in his garden, and to build things that would last. Whatever he created – whether it was a finely crafted project, a flourishing row of tomatoes, or a perfect cast into the current – he poured himself into it fully.

Above all, Keith was a devoted husband, family man, and friend. He shared his life with his beloved wife, Alisa Abiney, building not just a home but a partnership filled with love, laughter, and shared dreams. His presence was steady, his advice sound, and his heart open to all who needed him.

Keith is survived by his wife, Alisa; his parents, Patrick and Doris Abiney; his siblings, Cindy Lavell and Kevin Abiney; his brother- and sister-in-law Mike and Jennifer White; his brother- and sister-in-law Robert and Rebecca Howe; his mother-in-law, Janet Howe; and his nieces and nephews, Alan and Megan Kline, Mark and Jessica Pelfrey, Marie White, and Ian White.

His absence leaves a space that can never be filled, but his love and the lessons he taught will live on in those who had known him.

A remembrance gathering will be held at the Dowagiac Lions Club House, 28606 Blue Bird Street, Dowagiac, Michigan on Sunday September 14 th from 2:00 to 4:00 PM. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests honoring Keith by spending a day outdoors – planting something new, building something with your hands, or simply pausing to breathe in the beauty of the world, just as he so often did.

Albert Yob

February 20, 1942 – August 28, 2025

Albert R. Yob "Al", age 83 of New London, passed away on Thursday, August 28, 2025. AL was born February 20, 1942 in Raton, New Mexico to the late Peter and Silvia (Bertol) Yob. In his younger years he worked at his parent's grocery store in Raton, New Mexico. He was united in marriage to Nancy Radtke on June 8, 1968 in Kalamazoo, MI. Alserved his country in the U.S. Army from 1960-1963. After finishing his time in the service, Al went to Southern Colorado State for higher education. After college, a career at Tyler Refrigeration in Niles, Michigan, retiring in 2001. Al continued working in his retirement, until he turned 67. Later in retirement, they moved to New London to be closer to family. He volunteered at St. Mary's Church Food Pantry in Niles and with the senior center in New London. Al loved to cook and loved to host Thanksgiving every year. He was a friend to all. Everyone loved "Al".

Al is survived by his children, Lynne (Chris) Muller and Larry (Diana) Yob; grandchildren, Ashley (James), Amanda (Steve), Justin, Hanna, Sara (Matthew) and Grace; along with his great-grandchildren, Heather, Holden, Hudson and Robert and many nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, Al was preceded in death by his siblings, Vinco (Marie), Peter (Alice), Annie (Red) Martin, Louie (Barbara), Bruna (Jerry) Voegele and Lena (Charles) Musso.

The Memorial Service will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 9, 2025 at Most Precious Blood Catholic Church in New London with Fr. David Hoffman officiating. Visitation will take place from 9:30 a.m until the time of the service. Burial will be at a later date at Linsley Cemetery, Cheshire Center, Allegan, MI.

In keeping with Al's spirit of giving to the church and community, in lieu of flowers, donations are encouraged to be made to St. Mary's Christian Food Service Center and Food Pantry – 322 Clay St., Niles, MI 49120.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Cline & Hanson Funeral Home, New London, WI. Please share a memory or a message online: www.clinehanson funeralhome.com.

See more obituaries on page A5

Helping Hands to host medical equipment drive

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

CASSOPOLIS — Helping Hands of Cass County, 130 S. Broadway St., Cassopolis, will host a durable medical equipment drive from Sept. 15 to Oct. 10. The organization is asking for donations of used medical supplies to support a new initiative.

Items such as wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches, and orthopedic supplies are needed. The donations will be transported to Midwest Mission in Pawnee, Illinois, which collects and distributes resources both nationally and internationally. In exchange for the medical equipment, Midwest Missions will provide bicycles to Helping Hands for a future initiative.

Helping Hands is also accepting donations of sewing machines to help support women-operated micro-businesses overseas.

Donations can be delivered to Helping Hands of Cass County at 130 S. Broadway in Cassopolis, Monday through Thursday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, contact Diane Seifert at 269-699-5373.

OBITUARIES

Tamara Anderson

February 4, 1960 – September 1, 2025

Tamara Susan Anderson, 65, passed away on Monday, September 1, 2025, in Niles, Michigan, surrounded in love by her Husband, Father, and Daughter.

Tammy was born on February 4, 1960 in South Bend, Indiana to Frederick G. Hoekstra and Carol (Hegedus) Hoekstra. The family built a home on Bergan Street in South Bend, Indiana. It was there that Tammy recalls an idyllic childhood, playing endlessly with childhood friends, Sue, Beth, and Jody Preston. Kids played outside then, riding bikes, laughing, morning to dusk. It was a beautiful time for her and she made friendships that lasted a lifetime, as did all of them.

It was in 1970 when a new chapter in her life began when the family built a beautiful home on the St. Joseph River in Niles. There, she began to attend Brandywine Public Schools, and a shy girl made new friends. She was a graduate in the class of 1978. It was there that she met her future father-in-law, teacher Mr. (Jim) Anderson. Little did she know how her future would be shaped later by this man and his family. She made many numerous friends at Brandywine, most of whom remained in touch for her entire life. Sheri Covyeou, Helen Graham Mackling, Lynda Tittle Liggett, Margie Woody, and Beth Brovold.

After graduating, Tammy began working at Pawating Hospital in Niles. There she worked in many capacities including Emergency Room registration, cardio pulmonary receptionist, central scheduling and more. It was there that her organizational and planning talents flourished. She also made many lifelong friends here including Sherri Taylor and Linda Zsabo, who continue to provide friendship and support to the family. She earned a 30-year service pin from there, something she took great pride in. During this time, Tammy briefly worked at SWM Ambulance Service where she met her first husband Roger McCarty. Together they were blessed with a beautiful daughter, Tara Kristine McCarty Hunsberger. Though divorced, Roger and Tammy always cooperated in a way to raise Tara in the best fashion possible. It was multiplied love.

On a fateful New Years eve 12-31-'85, Tammy and Phil Anderson were introduced at their friend's house party, Mike and Sherri Taylor. Such began a love affair to last the rest of her life and beyond. Imagine her surprise to find out that her new love was none other than the son of her teacher Mr. Anderson. We always had fun with that. Tammy and Phil were married at the First United Methodist Church in Buchanan, Michigan on May 21,1988. In March of 1989, they were blessed with a son, Dustin James Anderson. The fun and commitments of raising a family fit Tammy perfectly, always making sure all of the immediate and extended family had everything they needed to grow and flourish. No one else ever needed to make any plans, you could bet that Tammy always had it covered. There was never anything missed, from traveling baseball, school functions, etc. She was very good with hair, she and Tara had endless hours designing and cutting her hair. They would even want to do up Dustin's in every conceivable fashion, though Dad discouraged it. Dad usually (always) lost those arguments.

As years went by and the kids grew up and became beautiful adults, Phil's business continued to grow, Cut Above Wood Designs. It was with a little encouragement from Phil that she come on board to help with the growing business. This turned out to be exactly what she and the business needed. Her skills with organization and planning reached new heights. She developed payroll, purchasing, and bookkeeping systems that propelled the business to new heights, continuing to grow today. The company has made thousands of custom cabinets and delivered/installed work on both coasts, Sand Diego, Brooklyn, Indianapolis, Maui, and countless in the Michiana area. Phil and Tammy became the perfect business partnership, and she had a way of working with all the vendors and employees that was effortless and easy.

Tammy's favorite hobby was cooking. Over the years her skills evolved from being the economical short order cook that is needed for a growing family, to a highly skilled and studied chef. Phil was lucky enough to come home to a beautiful smile and an amazing dish most every night. Other hobbies included gardening, crossword puzzles and Sudoku to keep her mind sharp. She of course loved music too, her favorites being The Beatles, Dan Fogleberg, Kenny Chesney, Little Big Town, Chris Stapleton, and Vince Gill. The backyard of their home provided much inspiration to Tammy, feeding the deer and watching hummingbirds brought endless joy. She was endlessly entertained by the classic comedy I love Lucy, as well as Seinfeld and Friends.

Phil and Tammy's favorite times together were travels up north, Onekama, Frankfurt, Leelenau, Charlevoix, Petoskey, but mostly The Straits of Mackinaw. Many visits were made to area hotels and especially a favorite cottage they stayed at, overlooking the bridge and the Straits. Her spirit is surely left there.

More than anything she loved her children and grandchildren. Her life revolved around them. For years she would pick up Ava and Logan from school, bring them home and make sure they were cared for, often taking them to Dairy Queen or Venis for treats. She was an ultimate protector, making sure her family and friends were armed with the information to better themselves or just have a good day. She would post daily on Facebook about power outages, storms, lost pets, best deals, stories of inspiration, whatever struck her that might help others out. The world needs more people like Tammy, but there was only one.

Tammy was preceded in death by her mother this spring, Carol Hoekstra.

Left to cherish the memory of Tammy is her loving husband of 37 years, Philip Anderson; children, Tara (Casey) Hunsberger and Dustin (Elizabeth) Anderson; grandchildren, Logan, Ava Rose, Selah, Dahlia, Azalea, Remington, and Ira, and father, her rock Fred Hoekstra. Other close family are Kent and Jeanne Hegadus, Marcia, Kim and Kevin Kuharic, brother-in-law, Jerry Anderson, countless special friends though none closer than Sherry Taylor and Linda Zsabo.

Tammy's warmth, compassion, infectious laughter and beautiful smile will be profoundly missed by all who knew her.

Memorial contributions in memory of Tammy may be made out to Berrien County Cancer Service Inc or RiverBend Cancer Services.

Visitation for Tammy will be on Friday, September 5, 2025, from 12:00pm to 1:00pm with a Funeral Service to be held at 1:00pm at Brown Funeral Home. Burial will immediately follow at Calvary Cemetery.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Photos, condolences, and memories may be left for Tammy's family at www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com

Tracy Morton

April 25, 1962 – August 29, 2025

Tracy Patricia Morton, 63, of Dowagiac, Michigan passed away Friday, August 29, 2025 in the peace and comfort of her family's presence after a courageous battle with cancer in 2016.

Born April 25, 1962, in Dowagiac, she was the daughter of Patrick and Marilyn Flanagan. Tracy was married to her devoted husband, Brian Douglas Morton, who survives.

She is also survived by her children: Douglas Allen (Sarah) Flanagan, William "Bill" Patrick (Crystal) Ashley, Carl "Adam" (Ciara) Ashley, Rachelle Miller, and Chris (Carissa) Morton. Tracy's greatest joy was her grandchildren: Micah Flanagan, Peyton Flanagan, Natalie Flanagan, and Ruby Flanagan; Henry Ashley and Becca Ashley; Margaret Ashley, Eli Ashley, and Walker Ashley; Lilly Miller and Abby Miller; Emilia Morton and Penelope Morton. She is also survived by her sisters, Colleen Wilson, Karen (Tom) Langley, Kathleen Flanagan; her brothers, Carroll (Fae) James, James (Gladys) James; her sister-in-law Lucy Flanagan; and a host of nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents and two brothers, Patrick Flanagan and Sean Flanagan.

Tracy was a graduate of Dowagiac High School and Lake Michigan College, where she earned her degree as a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant. She faithfully attended Pleasant View Church of Christ in Cassopolis with her husband for many years. A devoted Christian, she consistently practiced and shared her faith, which remained central to her life.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Tracy's life Saturday, September 6, 2025 from 10:00 a.m. until time of service at 11:00 a.m. in Pleasant View Church of Christ, 60550 Crooked Creek Road (corner of M-60) in Cassopolis.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Joan Atherton

March 3, 1956 – August 12, 2025

Joan Rae Atherton, 69, of Cassopolis, died peacefully in the comfort of her family's presence.

Her life began March 3, 1956, in Niles, Michigan, the youngest of two born to Wesley and Irma Jean Kloko. She married Robert Atherton July 14, 1984, in Niles, Michigan.

Joan was the matriarch of the family and loved organizing events with her loved ones. Her grandchildren and great grandchildren were the light of her life. She was a devout Christian and participated in church virtually at Christian Center Church. Joan had a wide array of occupations throughout her life, including a professional singer, songwriter, aerobics teacher, and working at a records store.

Joan will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her husband of forty-one years; one daughter, Jovan (Joe) Groves of Sodus; one son, Jordan Atherton of Dowagiac; four grandsons, Gabriel Atherton, Gavin Atherton, Joseph Groves, Teddy Atherton, all of Dowagiac; and two great grandchildren, Max, Arty.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Lynn Kloko.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Joan's life on a date and at a time to be announced.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Joan be made to the family in care of the funeral home to offset funeral expenses.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com

See more obituaries on page A4

Death notices

Cathy Carnes, 66, passed away on Sunday, August 31, 2025, in Stevensville, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Alan Lee Dutton, 76, passed away on Friday, August 29, 2025, in St. Joseph, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Rickie Gunn

Rickie Nelson Gunn, 66, of Niles, died unexpectedly Monday, August 25, 2025. His life began February 28, 1959 in Kilmichael, Mississippi.

Rickie graduated from Brandywine High School in 1977. He was a member of New Vision Apostolic Church and worked for Tree Play. Rickie was truly a "Momma's boy". He took every effort to bring her gifts and make her happy. Rickie liked to dress well and took pride in his appearance. He could often be found listening to music. Rickie was a man of God. It was important to him to teach his children the bible and lead them to know God.

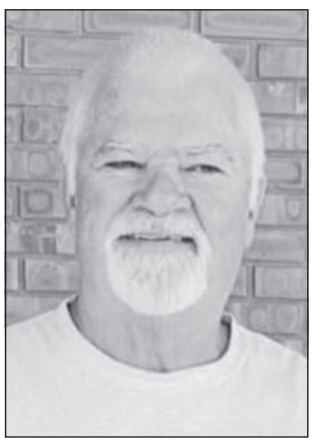
Rickie will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by his mother, Lathei Mae Moore; one daughter, Rikki Chantaya Wakes; two sons, Brandon Gunn, Justin Gunn; three grandchildren; sisters, Susan (Ronald) Webb, Vickie Lynn (Louis) Griffin, Tonya (Burnell) Smith, Jayanna Smith; two brothers, George (Altfrevia) Howell, Curtis Smith; four step sisters, Georgetta, Melva, Linda, Joann; step brother, Robert Howell; three foster brothers, Michael Przybylinski, Luke Clampton, Zackary Hemming; close friend Jerry Broyles; a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and favorite cousin, Melissa Gunn. He was preceded in death by his child, Azzarie Gunn.

The family and friends will gather Friday, September 5, in Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services 615 East Main, Niles, from 11:00a.m. until the time of service at 12noon.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Walter Whitmyer Jr.

July 3, 1946 – August 29, 2025



Walter Robert "Bob" Whitmyer, Jr., 79, of Bridgman, died Friday, August 29, 2025.

His life began July 3, 1946 in Dowagiac, Michigan, born to Walter and Ronni Whitmyer, Sr.

Bob will be remembered as a very devoted family man and friend. He had a passion for hunting and fishing, spending countless hours outdoors where he felt at peace. Bob cherished his time with his family and friends, and nothing brought him greater happiness than being with grandchildren and great grandchildren. He will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved him.

Bob is survived by his two daughters, Jessica (John) Kubit of Corona, California, Taryn Whitmyer of Elkhart, Indiana; grandchildren, Casey Guinn, Shelby Weidner, Kloey Weidner, Ava Kubit, Carter Kubit; great grandchildren, Alaina, Zayden, Evelyn; sister, Shirley (Glen) Stone of Tennessee; brothers, Melvin "Buddy" (Beverly) Whitmyer of New Hampshire, Dennis Whitmyer of San Diego, California; and a host of nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents and brother, William Whitmyer.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Bob's life Saturday, September 6, 2025 from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm in the Edwardsburg American Legion Post 365, 25751 US 12, Edwardsburg.

Bob will be laid to rest in Reames and Norton Cemetery, Cassopolis.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Walter be made to the Edwardsburg American Legion Post 365, 25751 US 12, Edwardsburg, Michigan 49112.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

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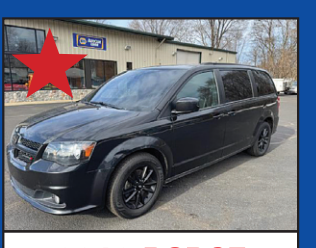

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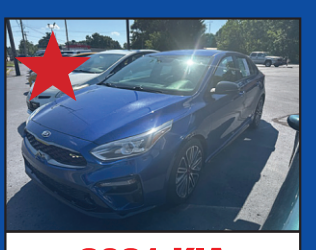

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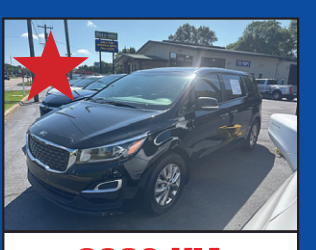

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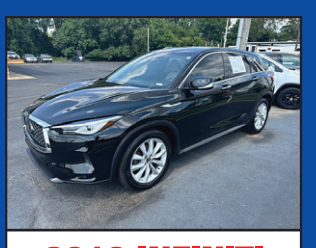

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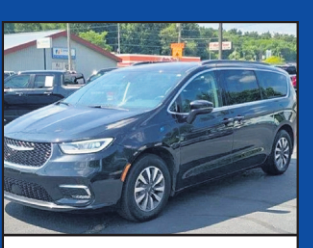

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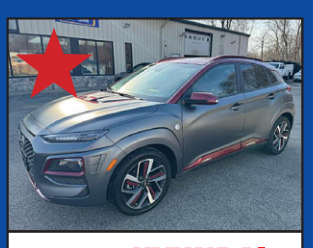

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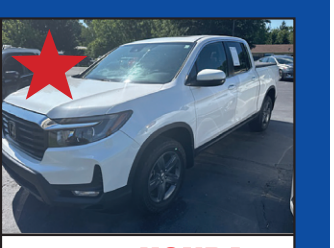

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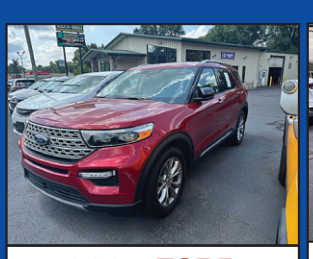

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Dowagiac downs South Haven 35-9 in season opener

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

SOUTH HAVEN — The Dowagiac football team opened its season with a 35-9 road victory over South Haven.

The Chieftains' offense was powered by a strong rushing attack that churned out 300 yards on the ground. Tim Masterman led the way with 115 rushing yards.

Quentin Hill had a standout performance, scoring three touchdowns: two rushing and one on a defensive scoop-and-score. Devin Rock also contributed with a rushing touchdown and a receiving touchdown. Quarterback Skylar Vincek threw a touchdown pass.

On defense, Khaliff Reyna led the team with six tackles.

"I was very happy with our physical nature all night but we understand that there were too many penalties and mistakes for us to be happy even with the win," said Dowagiac head coach Duane Davis. "We are glad we hit our week one goal but it is on to Three Rivers now and the team is excited for the match up."

The Chieftains (1-0) will face the Wildcats (1-0) at 7 p.m. on the road Friday at Armstrong Field.

Edwardsburg 3-0 at Dowagiac Quad

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

EDWARDSBURG — The Eddies went 3-0 at the Dowagiac Quad on Tuesday, improving their overall record to 9-0.

The team defeated St. Joe 25-22, 25-18; Dowagiac 25-9,25-12; South Haven 25-13, 25-17.

Sarah Pippin and Ella Laskowski were the offensive leaders with 26 kills each. Mya Eberlein contributed 10 kills and a team-high eight blocks.

Other key contributors included Shelby Laubach with three kills and Kya Shier with two kills and three aces.

Rylie Rosenkrantz led the team with 58 assists, while Erin Solarek added five. Defensively, Sophiah Kuntz led with 14 digs and three aces. Arden Sponsky added nine digs.

In addition to its loss to Edwardsburg, Dowagiac fell to South Haven 22-25, 25-17,19-25 and St. Joseph 16-25, 17-25.

"Tonight was not our night, we struggled in all areas," said Dowagiac coach Amber Todd. "Our communication and team camaraderie were selective. There were spurts of great moments and then other moments to where we fell apart. As a whole we agreed that we need to be consistent as a team in order to finish a set of 25 points."

Offensively, Marlie Carpenter and Tessa Deering led the team with 10 kills each. They were followed by Ava Nate, who had seven kills, and Brianna Campbell with five.

Hanah McCuddy and Claire Hess each recorded 18 assists. At the service line, Hess led with six aces.

On defense, Zabrina Shivers recorded a team-high 18 digs, while Hess contributed 13 digs, and McCuddy and Deering each had 11. Ava Nate and Brianna Campbell were the leaders in blocks, with four each.

See **QUAD**, page B2

Photo courtesy of Jeff Douglas

Tanya Hagen | Leader Publications Contributor

Vikings tame Bears

Strong second half propels Niles to 28-18 win over St. Joseph

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — The Niles football team used a strong second-half surge to take down St. Joseph Friday, Aug. 29 in a matchup between two of southwest Michigan's best teams.

The Vikings scored 21 straight points in the second half on their way to a 28-18 statement win over the Bears.

"I just told them, I was really proud of the way we responded in the third quarter," said Niles Head Coach Scot Shaw. "I don't think we played a very good first quarter and second quarter – and we started off that way in the third quarter – we just had to wake up and we did so and had some nice gains offensively and some nice stops on defense."

St. Joseph edged the Vikings 294-293 in total yards while the Vikings outgained the Bears 251-214 on the ground. Alex Anderson led the Vikings with 79 yards and one touchdown on eight carries and Elijah Norris tallied 20 carries for 73 yards. On defense, Ward Cheney had 17 tackles (four solo, 13 assisted) and one sack and Bryce Zache finished with eight tackles, seven pass deflections and two interceptions.

Freshman quarterback Will Turnbull ran for a touchdown and passed for another while committing zero turnovers orchestrating the Vikings offense. Dane Asmus hauled in the passing touchdown.

"I saw him grow as the game went on and that's really good to see," Shaw said. "He wasn't real sure that he wanted to keep the ball and pitch early. I think he's going to get there, though. He's going to be tough when he figures it all out."

The first half was slow as both teams worked to establish themselves on offense. The Bears struck first with a 5-yard touchdown run from quarterback Hudson Corning. The Bears failed to convert the two-point conversion, which gave St. Joseph a 6-0 lead with two minutes remaining in the third quarter.

After stalling on its first few drives, the Vikings put together a 10-play, 45-yard drive before halftime, capped by a one-yard score from Turnbull, his first varsity touchdown. The Vikings took a 7-6 lead into halftime.

The Bears came out of the break and answered the Vikings score, driving the field and punching in an Ish Dixon touchdown on fourth-and-goal to take a 12-7 lead after failing the two-point conversion again.

The Niles offense emerged from the break looking to re-establish itself on the line of scrimmage and did just that, marching 69 yards in 11 plays with Brandon Walsh muscling through a host of Bears to find the end zone. After failing to convert the two-point conversion, the Vikings took a 13-12 with 1:30 left in the third.

The play of the game happened on the ensuing Bears possession when a Corning pass was intercepted by Zache, his first of two.

"He had a great game, covered well," Shaw said. "I would like him to stay a little bit more on top of his receiver than trying to undercut it. He was lucky with two balls but one went over his head for a touchdown… Like we said all along, we have new guys in certain places. I thought many of them really stood out and played well."

The Vikings made the Bears pay for the miscue a few plays later when Turnbull connected with Asmus on a

See **VIKINGS**, page B6

Rangers fall to Rams in opener

By SCOTT HASSSINGER
For Leader

CASSOPOLIS — Cassopolis football coach Jeremiah Lee believes his Rangers are a much stronger defensive unit than what they showed in last week's season-opening 62-20 home loss to Galesburg-Augusta.

The visiting Rams shined offensively the entire night while exposing the Rangers' youth and inexperience on defense by using the counter play.

Three different ballcarriers found the endzone in the first quarter as Galesburg-Augusta (1-0) built an early 20-0 advantage. Chuck Hadley's Rams got rushing touchdowns from senior halfbacks Jonah Ranes (three yards) and Justin Martin (50 yards) along with a four-yard strike from junior tailback Giovanni Evans. Martin also caught a two-point conversion pass from his junior quarterback Patrick Armock.

Evans broke through the Rangers' defensive front and galloped 25-yards for the Rams' next score with 8:04 left in the second quarter, extending the lead to 28-0. Junior Tyler Evans added the conversion run.

The Rangers' first chance to score was negated when junior Lane Leach was stopped short of the goal line on fourth down at the Rams' four-yard line.

But on its next series, Cassopolis chipped its deficit to 28-6 with 4:19 left in the half on junior quarterback Lucas Williams' four-yard keeper. The score capped an impressive 92-yard scoring drive that was set up after Leighton Solomon recovered a Galesburg-Augusta fumble. Teammate Easton Mitchell was credited with causing the fumble. The PAT by sophomore kicker Jayden Pflug failed.

Martin raced 47 yards to paydirt for the Rams' next score with 2:37 left before intermission and a 34-6 cushion.

Cassopolis responded immediately with Williams floating a perfect 57-yard TD spiral into the waiting hands of senior end Jaylen Pratt who was wide open in the left corner of the end zone. Pflug's conversion run failed, leaving the hosts down 34-12 with 2:13 left before intermission.

Martin's 35-yard scoring dash and Armock's

See **RANGERS**, page B2

Scott Hassinger / Leader Publications Contributor

Cassopolis junior quarterback Lucas Williams (4) tucks the football as he runs downfield away from a Galesburg-Augusta defending in the first half of Friday's home loss to the Rams.

Edwardsburg shuts down Sturgis 8-0

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

EDWARDSBURG — The Edwardsburg boys soccer team shut out Sturgis 8-0 on Wednesday at home, bringing their season record to 6-1-0 and their Wolverine Conference record to 1-0-0.

Mobius Stubblefield scored three times for the Eddies and Maverick Gates twice. Stubblefield's first goal was assisted by Aleck Rodriguez, who had three assists in the game, while his second was unassisted and third was assisted by Brayden Fischer. Gates' two goals were both assisted by Fischer, who also scored a goal himself with an assist from Landon Goetz.

Jon Pepper and Austin Leak each added a goal. Leak and Pepper's goals were assisted by Rodriguez.

Buchanan 5, Brandywine 1

The Bucks overpowered the Bobcats Wednesday night. Jacob Kuntz scored two goals for the Bucks and Nico Sanchez, Easton May and Ben Bosse also found the back of the net for Buchanan. Mason Michelin scored Brandywine's lone goal.

Paw Paw 5, Niles 0

Bloomingdale 7, Cassopolis 3

Berrien Springs 11, Dowagiac 3

QUAD

From page B1

Buchanan swept by South Bend St. Joseph

SOUTH BEND – The Buchanan volleyball team lost to South Bend St. Joseph in three sets on Tuesday 18-25, 19-25, 22-25.

Gabby Carson led the team with nine kills and two assisted blocks. Kenzie Boller contributed eight kills, while Kate Holloway added six.

Defensively, Emily Holt and Haylee Legault each had 12 digs and Legault also recorded two aces.

Other key contributors on defense included Ella Fanslow with 10 digs and Finley Kehoe with nine digs.

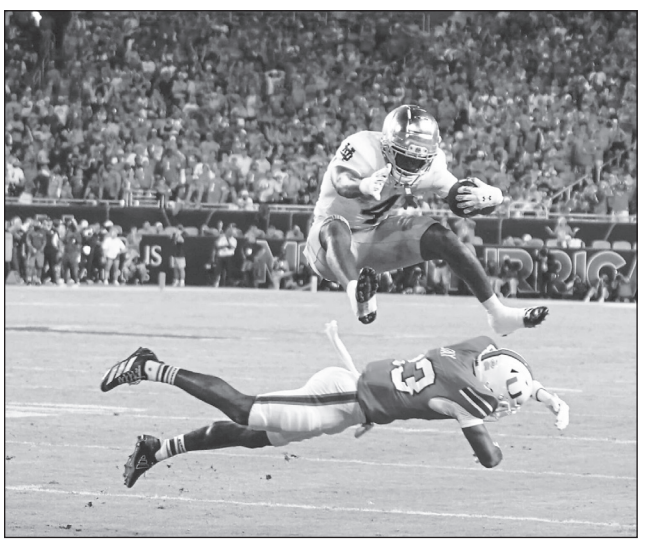
Morgan Weldy led the Bucks in assists with 28.

The loss brings Buchanan's overall record to 4-3.

Brandywine 3, Cassopolis 2

Wednesday, Sept. 3

Brandywine edges Cassopolis 20-25, 25-17, 25-22,14-25, 16-14.



Nick Shelton / Leader Publications Contributor

No. 10 Miami edges No. 6 Notre Dame 27-24

By NICK SHELTON
Leader Publications Contributor

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — The No. 10 Miami Hurricanes defeated the No. 6 Notre Dame Fighting Irish 27-24 in a rain-soaked battle at Hard Rock Stadium Sunday, Aug. 31, handing Notre Dame a loss in its season opener.

Miami quarterback Carson Beck finished the game 20-of-30 for 205 yards and two touchdowns. The Hurricanes' rushing attack added 119 yards on the ground.

For Notre Dame, redshirt freshman quarterback CJ Carr completed 19 of 33 passes for 221 yards, in his first start.

He also threw one touchdown and one interception and added a rushing touchdown. The Fighting Irish struggled to get their ground game going, managing just 93 rushing yards on 28 attempts.

The Irish have a bye this week before hosting Texas A&M Saturday, Sept. 13.

RANGERS

From page B1

conversion run hiked the Rams' lead to 42-12 entering halftime.

Less than three minutes into the third quarter, Martin would zip 13 yards down the sideline for another Rams' TD and a 48-12 advantage.

Williams, who generated a great deal of the Rangers' offense on the night, capped off a Cassopolis 66-yard scoring drive with his 33-yard scoring toss to sophomore wideout Mason Nelson.

The junior speedster, who completed 8-of-17 passes for 234 yards and a pair of TDs, added the conversion run to make it 48-20 with 5:18 left in the period.

The 6-foot-2 175-pound Wiliams added 12 rushes for 33 yards and one TD for the Rangers, now 0-1.

"Lucas made real good decisions for us tonight and has shown more leadership in the huddle. I thought everyone fought real hard to the end and never gave up. Now we have to try and get back on track next week," Lee said.

Nelson emerged as Williams' top receiver with three receptions for 105 yards and one TD. Jaii Vanhphoumy added two catches for 71 yards.

"We have a lot of good things to build off of. Defensively we just made too many mistakes. We have to concentrate on doing our own jobs and not someone else's. Offensively I feel we showed some good things and have some of the better athletes in the Southwest 10 Conference," Lee said.

Lee also credited the play on defense by Tyson West and junior Lane Leach.

Martin added his fourth TD a short time later on a four-yard carry and Armock added the conversion run for a 56-20 lead at the 3:25 mark of the period.

Evans' five-yard TD scamper with 3:09 left in the fourth quarter capped the Rams' scoring. Galesburg-Augusta's last TD was set up after one of its defenders intercepted a Williams' pass.

A moment of silence for Cassopolis sophomore football player Kollin Grover, who died in a tragic accident over the summer, was held just before the playing of the National Anthem. The Cassopolis Rocket football teams and cheerleading were also honored during halftime ceremonies.

Cassopolis remains at home again next Friday to host Comstock at William F. Scott Field at 7 p.m.

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Brandywine junior Kaden Santana carries the ball during Thursday's home game against Hartford.

Brandywine falls to Hartford 52-8 in season opener

NILES CHARTER TOWNSHIP — Entering the 2025 season, Brandywine head coach Jeff Miller knew his program rebuilding from the ground up. The first-year head coach took over a program that went 2-7 a season ago and is rebuilding the program from the ground up.

The first game of the Miller era featured the highs and lows associated with a team learning on the fly how to play as a unit. After scoring the game's first touchdown, the Bobcats gave up 52 unanswered points to visiting Hartford in a 52-8 loss.

"Like I've said to anybody who will listen, this is starting from the bottom up," he said. "It's great that we have more numbers and it's great that the kids are excited but it's gonna take some time and people are gonna have to be patient, and first and foremost, the kids are gonna have to be patient."

The Bobcats struck first when senior Nylen Goins intercepted a Mason Mireles pass and returned it 35 yards for the touchdown. The ensuing two-point conversion was successful, giving the Bobcats a 8-0 lead with 10:30 to go in the first quarter.

"It was probably a different look than they were expecting and Nylen did exactly what he was supposed to do," Miller said. "He read his keys, made a great play on the ball and took it to the end zone."

The Bobcats had opportunities to find the end zone on offense but were not able to capitalize.

After driving within the Hartford five-yard line in the second quarter, a series of penalties backed Brandywine into a fourth-and-long situation that resulted in a turnover on downs. The Bobcats were able to create big plays, with Warfield connecting with Goins on a 31-yard pass and Parker Anglin breaking free for a 54-yard run.

While the team has more players than last year, Miller said nine players played both ways Thursday night, with more playing new positions for snaps at a time due to cramping issues.

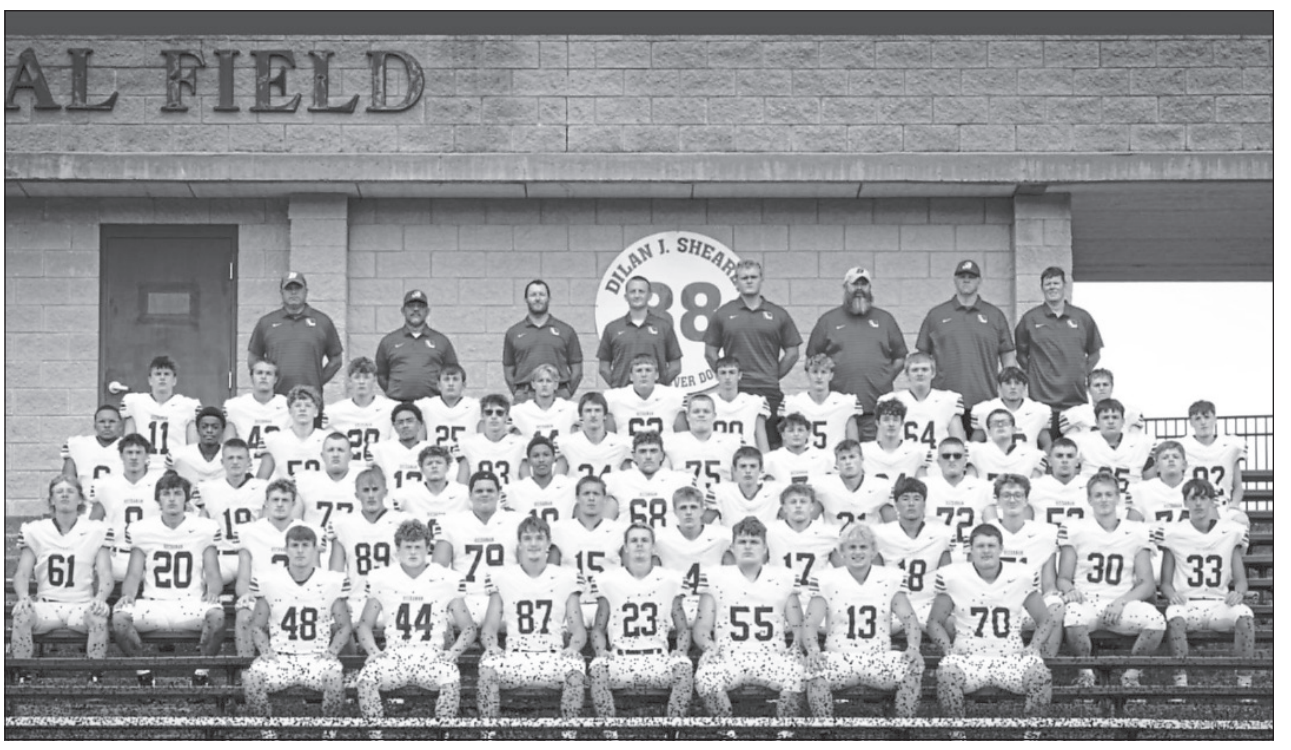
"Somebody said to me that we match up well against [Hartford], which we do and we're more talented than they are, and I agree with that but we have nine guys going both ways," he said. "So immediately, thinking of a game plan, we're gonna try to run the clock on offense, call formation and try to buy some rest time, but you saw guys cramping and it's not because they don't do hard work in practice, it's not like we don't ever run drills that are preparing them for the game. It's just when you get to that point – I mean, that's a lot of football to ask somebody to play. There's a reason that most places try to not have things going two ways.

"When a kid is cramping and then his sub is cramping and you're throwing people at positions that they have no idea what they're doing when you're not a really deep team... I'm proud of the kids who were thrown in the spots they haven't practiced. A lot of younger kids got thrown in, which I think is good, so they see what it's like."

While the loss did sting, Miller was proud of his team's effort as they aim to get back on track for next Friday's game at Watervliet.

"This was our first rodeo together," he said. "Not only them as players but us as coaches trying to figure out each other as far as doing our jobs and communicating. We talk to the kids about communicating all the time, but it's the same for the coaches so it's just about everybody getting a feel for each other and helping them understand that if you just keep showing up, you just keep doing what you're supposed to do, eventually, you turn the corner. I don't like that final score. I don't like getting a running clock. It's a super frustrating game but I'm not disappointed in the kids – I'm proud of the kids.

"One of our team rules is 'AYG,' which is whatever you're doing you give it all you got and I think, for the most part, we got that from them. We'll keep coming to work, being 'everyday guys' and trying to get better."



Submitted

Buchanan dominates Saugatuck in opener

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

SAUGATUCK — The Buchanan Bucks kicked off their season with a 36-14 road victory over Saugatuck Thursday, Aug. 28.

The Bucks' offense produced 487 total yards, including 286 rushing yards and 201 passing.

Buchanan (1-0) scored all of its points in the first three quarters, while Saugatuck (0-1) scored both of their touchdowns in the fourth quarter. The Bucks' scoring started in the first quarter with an 87-yard touchdown run by Max Cornelius. Carson Deming had two rushing touchdowns in the second quarter, from 16 yards and 9 yards out.

The Bucks continued to pull away in the third quarter with a 48-yard touchdown run from Deming, a 3-yard run from Cornelius, and a 51-yard touchdown pass from Cy Carlin to Brody Reed.

All of Buchanan's two-point conversion attempts failed.

Carlin was efficient, completing all six of his pass attempts for 125 yards and one touchdown. Lucas Zeiger, who will split time with Carlin at QB this season, completed 4 of 6 passes for 76 yards.

The Bucks' rushing attack was led by Cornelius, who ran for 137 yards and two touchdowns on 12 carries, and Deming, who had 71 yards and three touchdowns on four carries.

On the receiving end, Reed caught four passes for 141 yards and one touchdown. Owen Thompson also contributed with a 16-yard reception.

Defensively, Buchanan was led in tackles by Liam Edgerle and Jameson Pleasant, with four tackles each. The Bucks also forced one turnover, a fumble lost by Saugatuck.

The Bucks faced Coloma on the road Friday night. Visit leaderpub.com for a recap of the game.

Grandmother wants invites to grown grandchildren's birthday celebrations

R. Eric Thomas
Asking Eric

DEAR ERIC: My three daughters have grown children and celebrate their children's birthdays by each family going out to dinner with its immediate members. When my grandchildren were small, the families had at-home celebrations to which I was always invited. I miss those times, especially since I am no longer invited to the out-to-dinners, at which I would gladly pay for my meal. Is it too much to ask to be included in celebrating my grandchildren? – Wants to Celebrate

DEAR CELEBRATE: It's certainly not too much to ask. Now, forgive me for posing what might be a simplistic question, but have you asked if you can come along?

As your daughters shifted their families' plans, it may not have occurred to them that you'd want to come, especially with a restaurant dinner being less of an event than, say, a themed party at the house with a one-year-old smashing cake. So, if you haven't asked about attending, please do. It may even seem like a non-event for them, something you would be less inclined to join. I'd like to believe this is less a case of your daughters trying to exclude you and more a case of them trying to manage everyone's wants.

If, however, you have asked about it and gotten a non-answer or gotten rebuffed, try to think of ways that you can create a memory with your grandchildren around the time of their birthdays that will be meaningful to you and to them. Maybe it's a day out doing something, maybe it's a visit, maybe it's something else that matches their individual personalities. Celebrations are what we make of them – they don't have to be limited to a certain day or a certain group.

When I was growing up, our family had a red plate that was, I believe, sold by mail and had the words "You are special today" printed on it. For birthdays, scholastic achievements and other random celebrations, my parents would bring out that red plate for me or my siblings. Most of the time, we'd just have regular dinner on it, but to be the person eating off of the "You are special today" plate felt so momentous and rare. As an adult, I still long for that thrill. See if you can find something simple, but momentous and rare to share with your adult grandkids.

DEAR ERIC: We have a condo at the beach that has a pool. There is a couple that we know through other people that we are not friendly with, and they have a condo in another building without a pool.

Every summer, the wife texts me for the code to my pool. She uses the pool all summer long.

I've been kind in sharing our code with her for several years now. She always presents me with a $50 gift card for the whole summer. You can barely get two drinks for that these days.

They could very well afford to buy a condo with a pool, but they chose not to.

Should I continue to give her the code to our pool? I just feel if she knew that she exercised in a pool every day and didn't buy a condo with a pool, that's on her.

Of course, our condo fees are higher as we have pool expenses. What do you think? – Cracking the Code

DEAR CODE: I think she's getting away with an unheard-of bargain. Fifty dollars for an entire summer, from someone with whom she's not even friends? She got very lucky when she met you.

You have the power and the right to redefine the terms of this arrangement any time you want. You don't have a pre-existing relationship, and it sounds like, beyond the text and the gift card, you don't have much contact now. So, she has no right to expect this. And I can't imagine that if your condo board got wind of this, they'd be pleased. Check your condos by-laws; this could be a bigger issue than you think.

I think you should pull the plug on the whole arrangement. Blame the board or tell the truth. Whatever you'd like. You're doing something nice for her, but I don't quite understand why. If there are public pools in your area, she can use them. Or she can join a gym with a pool or a private club. There are other options. Or she can move into your building.

If you do decide to keep giving her the code, raise the price to match the pool expenses lumped into your condo fees. But frankly, this might create more problems than it solves. If she was a one-time guest, it would be a different story, but she's taking up summer residence, which affects you and your neighbors.

Send questions to R. Eric Thomas at eric@askingeric.com or P.O. Box 22474, Philadelphia, PA 19110.

SUDOKU

How to play: Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9.

			6		1		4	
	9						3	
	1	2	3	7		5		
7	6			8				
					6			
				3			2	4
		6		5	3	9	8	
	3						6	
	5		9		7			

HOROSCOPE

SEPT. 6

ARIES (March 21-April 19) Something unresolved in the back of your mind could be messing with your self-esteem – try to learn the lesson and release it. A change in understanding could cause changes in your special interests. Let intuition be your guide.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) A frenemy might tip their hand – don't take criticism from anyone you wouldn't switch places with. Beautify your home space; make changes gradually if you have kids or fur babies so they're easy to integrate. A financial shift could make a positive difference.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) You are not your paycheck or possessions though sometimes it might seem like it. Spend time in a comfort zone today if you can, it could nurture and heal you. Finances look poised to grow, benevolent energies + fiscal competence both help.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) A shared situation could be on your mind or in your heart. Gentle exploration of the particulars should reveal what you need to know. Friends might not have your back the way you'd like, could be they're dealing with their own issues now.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) You are likely to be attractive and smooth with serious 'rizz' today. Even so, if you can just drift for a while today, do – you could make a special connection with the cosmos. End the evening with someone precious to you if you can.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Both your mind and your ability to bring in assistance and resources are part of your skillset people can see. Your ambitions are soaring – you might foresee a tweak that could take you even higher. Spend just a little time in paying it forward.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) The past is filled with helpful lessons but it's not the place to spend all your time – use both insight and commitment to growth to build your best life. A friend could offer aesthetic input, use your own creative abilities to decide whether or not to take it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Loyalty and star-quality are great traits to bring to the table. Bring all your passion to what you do in the world, offer yourself with love. Something new is trying to come in, open your mind to fresh ideas and possibilities.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Someone near and dear could need a confidence boost; you could be the perfect person to bolster them. Your career remains in the spotlight, and your communication skills too. Seek out what is needed to complete a current project.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Get away today if you can – the same old scene could seem stifling and there's a big beautiful world out there. Your dream life could be intense now. A partner or colleague could offer a great idea that's worth following up.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Something to do with a money situation could be better than it looks, but a potential new investment should always be thoroughly checked. Showering someone with love or receiving it yourself could make for a great evening.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) Enjoy time with an artistic or musical hobby today, you should be gratified by your performance. Consider changes in your living space which could better support your ambitions in some way. Communications could be limited or misunderstood.

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

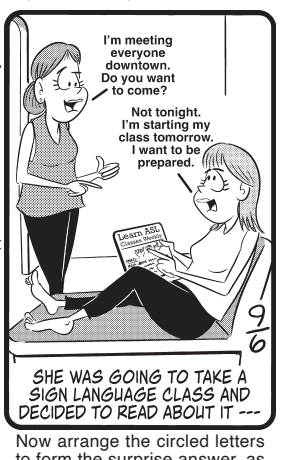
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

FRDAT

WRABN

YTREOH

ALRMEO


I'm meeting everyone downtown. Do you want to come?
Not tonight. I'm starting my class tomorrow. I want to be prepared.
Learn ASL
9/6
SHE WAS GOING TO TAKE A SIGN LANGUAGE CLASS AND DECIDED TO READ ABOUT IT ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here:

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WORD SLEUTH • SO MANY WAYS TO EGG-SCEL!

A O M K I F D B Z X P W U C S

Q D E H C A O P O N U D O L S

J E E S C R A M B L E D F H G

F V T L D C A Y W L D R V T G

S I Q T I D P N I L I A L K E

I L H F E O E O E E S H C D H

B E Z T Y L B D D W Y R Y E C

V D S U S D E T R Q N E O K T

P A N M R L J M F I N V U A O

B Y S A E R E V O O U O N B C

H F H E D C D A L A S G G E S

Friday's unlisted clue: ONLY

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions - forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.
Saturday's unlisted clue hint: EGG FOO —

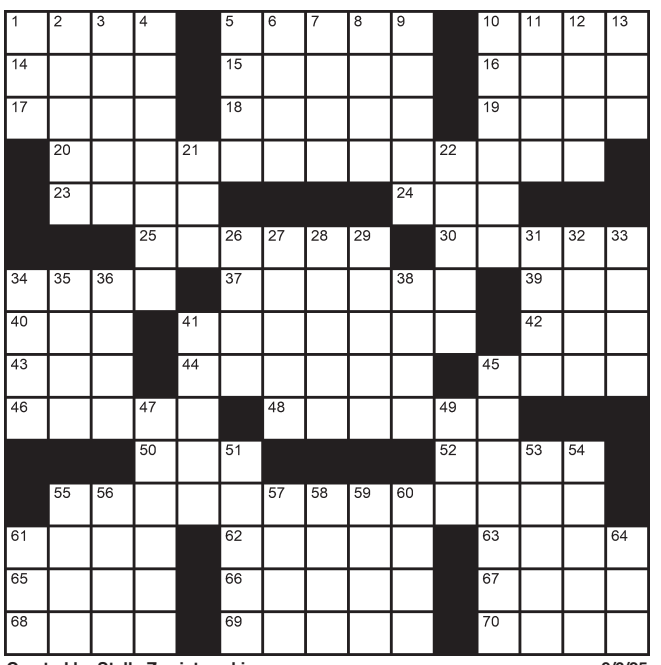
Baked	Egg salad	Over easy	Scrambled
Basted	Fried	Over hard	Soft-boiled
Coddled	Hard-boiled	Poached	Sunny-side up
Deviled	Omelette	Scotch eggs	

CRYPTOQUOTE

One letter stands for another. In this sample – **AXYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW** – A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

NBB YGA YGMSFGYE MV N YSZYBA NZA YSZYBA. — ZNBOG TNBXM AHAZEMK

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE



Created by Stella Zawistowski 9/6/25

ACROSS
1 Lose traction
5 Tennis supplies
10 Salt-n-__
14 Author Rice
15 Atlantic or Pacific
16 Symbol of Ireland
17 Fathers
18 Horned zoo animal
19 "Gotcha": 2 wds.
20 Twirling dance: 2 wds.
23 Servings of corn
24 Actor Brynner
25 Pollutes
30 Stocking material
34 Chihuahuas and collies
37 Floor covering
39 Adam and __
40 Nest egg option: Abbr.
41 Tries a number again
42 Singer Ritter
43 Droop
44 "In the pink" and "seeing red"
45 "__ that special?"
46 Bracelet part
48 Say yes
50 Headed up
52 Orange tubers
55 Egg-and-potato dish: 2 wds.
61 Defeat
62 "We hold __ truths..."
63 Worshipped figure
65 Very uncommon
66 Monastery rooms
67 Well ventilated
68 Creative pursuits
69 Crowns of light
70 "What's in a __?"

DOWN
1 Unhappy
2 Dishonest rogue
3 Mumbai's country
4 Abandons
5 "__ in the USA"
6 Feel sore
7 Floral necklaces
8 Country road
9 Wintry and white
10 Home of the Sixers, for short
11 Toward sunrise
12 Veep's boss, for short
13 Imitate
21 Covert intel group: Abbr.
22 Mom's sisters
26 Lemon __ tea
27 Gymnast Comaneci
28 Groups of three
29 Sends junk email to
31 Allows
32 Baking appliance
33 First in line
34 The "D" in DJ
35 Spoken aloud
36 Lovesick
38 "Anybody __?"
41 Become mature
45 From Rome or Naples
47 Roof tiles
49 "Science Guy" Bill
51 Get rid of
53 Newspapers and TV, e.g.
54 Bad weather
55 Cook in a hot pan
56 Role
57 Old NYC stadium
58 Satan's domain
59 Norway's capital
60 Sticky situation
61 Bikini top
64 Soap-making chemical

Today's solution

A	R	R	A	■	H	A	L	O	S	■	N	A	M	E
R	A	R	E	■	E	S	S	L	C	■	A	I	R	Y
A	E	E	T	■	T	H	G	I	S	■	I	D	O	L
S	P	A	N	I	S	H	O	M	E	L	E	T	■	■
C	L	A	S	P	■	D	E	S	S	A	N	T	■	■
S	A	G	L	I	M	O	D	I	O	M	S	I	N	T
I	R	A	R	E	■	I	A	L	S	E	T	X	■	■
D	O	G	S	■	C	A	R	P	E	T	V	E	■	■
N	O	L	Y	N	■	S	T	N	I	Y	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	S	R	A	E	S	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	E	N	I	A	W	E	S	E	N	N	E	V
■	■	■	■	■	■	Z	T	L	A	W	E	S	I	V
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
D	A	D	S	■	R	H	I	N	O	■	I	S	E	E
A	N	N	E	■	O	C	E	A	N	■	H	A	R	P
S	K	I	D	■	B	A	L	L	S	■	P	E	P	A

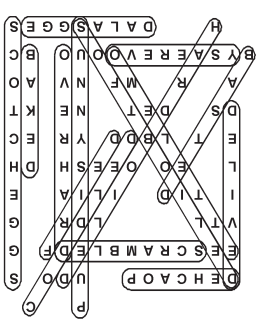
Sudoku solution

3	1	4	7	6	9	8	5	2
9	3	7	1	4	8	2	6	5
1	4	6	2	5	3	9	8	7
5	8	1	7	3	9	6	2	4
4	2	9	5	1	6	3	7	8
7	6	3	4	8	2	1	5	9
8	1	2	3	7	4	5	9	6
6	9	4	8	2	5	7	3	1
3	7	5	6	9	1	8	4	2

Jumble solution

DRAFT BRAWN THEORY MORALE
She was going to take a sign language class and decided to read about it — BEFOREHAND

Sleuth solution



Cryptoquote solution

ALL THE THOUGHTS OF A TURTLE ARE TURTLE. — RALPH WALDO EMERSON

SHEFFER CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Quaker pronoun
5 IRS employees
9 Small batteries
12 Oscar-winning actress Moreno
13 Harvard rival
14 "Today" rival, briefly
15 Off in the distance
16 Baby carriage
17 Director Howard
18 Tablet
19 Scooted
20 Michigan, e.g.
21 "How dare —!"
23 Food Network star Garten
25 Blue toon characters
28 "Amen to that!"
32 "Be quiet!"
33 "Endymion" poet
34 Shortly
36 Little accident
37 Rock's Brian
38 — Claire, WI
39 Den denizen
42 Retrieve
44 Church service
48 Couple's pronoun
49 Con
50 Series of courses
51 Hosp. scan
52 Curse
53 "Cogito — sum"
54 Fluffy neckpiece
55 Bar fight reminder
56 Cheer (for)

DOWN
1 Snare
2 LP player
3 List-ending abbr.
4 One up at dawn
5 Nicosia's land
6 Law firm aide, for short
7 "Ironic" singer Morissette
8 Religious sch.
9 Taj Mahal site
10 Out of control
11 Logical
20 First part of September, say
22 Frequently
24 Finnish tech giant
25 High school subj.
26 Fortify
27 Italian article
29 Fan's shout
30 Actress Hagen
31 Kreskin's claim
35 French brandy
36 Line of work
39 Broadway flop
40 Continental currency
41 Opera house solo
43 Sicilian volcano
45 Aviation prefix
46 Palm starch
47 Piggy bank opening
49 Six-pack muscles

Solution time: 26 mins.

B	O	A	■	S	C	A	R	■	R	O	O	T	■	■
M	R	I	■	A	N	E	■	E	R	G	O	■	■	■
O	U	R	■	A	N	T	I	■	M	E	A	L	■	■
B	E	A	R	■	G	E	T	■	M	A	S	S	■	■
■	■	■	U	A	E	■	N	O	■	■	■	■	■	■
I	N	A	S	E	C	■	M	I	S	H	A	P	■	■
C	A	N	I	■	■	■	K	E	A	T	S	■	■	■
S	M	U	R	F	S	■	S	O	T	R	U	E	■	■
■	■	■	A	N	I	■	■	Y	O	U	■	■	■	■
P	I	L	L	■	R	A	N	■	L	A	K	E	■	■
A	F	A	R	■	P	R	A	M	■	R	O	N	■	■
R	I	T	A	■	Y	A	L	E	■	G	M	A	■	■
T	H	E	E	■	C	P	A	S	■	A	A	S	■	■

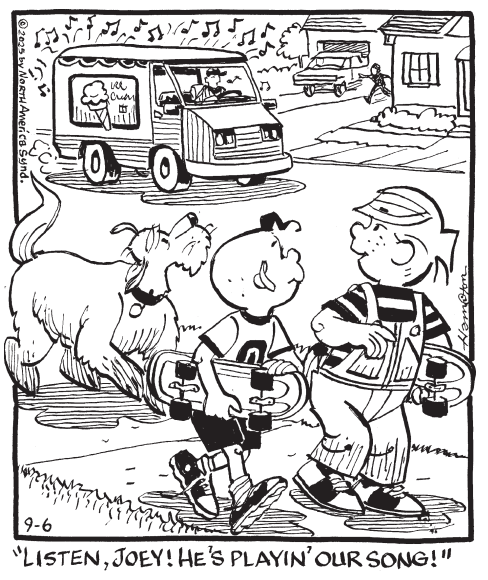
Today's solution

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	8	■	9	10	11
12				■	13				■	14		
15				■	16				■	17		
18				■	19			■	20			
■	■	■	21	22		■	23	24		■	■	■
25	26	27				■	28			29	30	31
32					■	■	■	33				
34					35	■	36					
■	■	■	37			■	38			■	■	■
39	40	41		■	42	43		■	44	45	46	47
48			■	49				■	50			
51			■	52				■	53			
54			■	55				■	56			

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

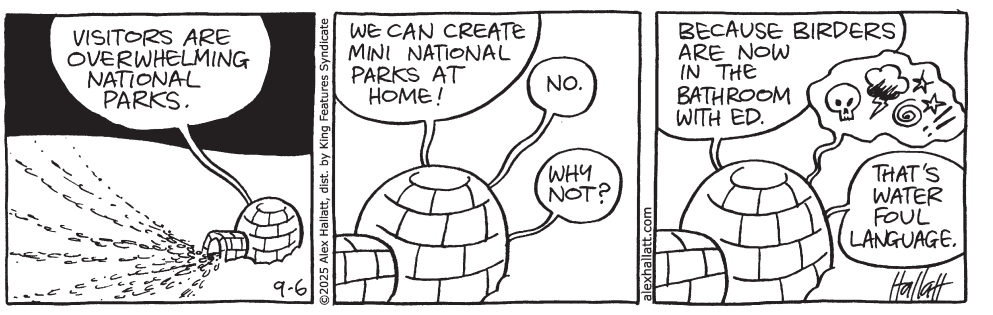
"God has His flashlight turned on to show us the way."

DENNIS THE MENACE



"LISTEN, JOEY! HE'S PLAYIN' OUR SONG!"

ARCTIC CIRCLE


VISITORS ARE OVERWHELMING NATIONAL PARKS.
9-6
WE CAN CREATE MINI NATIONAL PARKS AT HOME!
NO.
WHY NOT?
©2025 Alex Hallatt, dist. by King Features Syndicate
alexhallatt.com
BECAUSE BIRDERS ARE NOW IN THE BATHROOM WITH ED.
THAT'S WATER FOUL LANGUAGE.
Hallatt

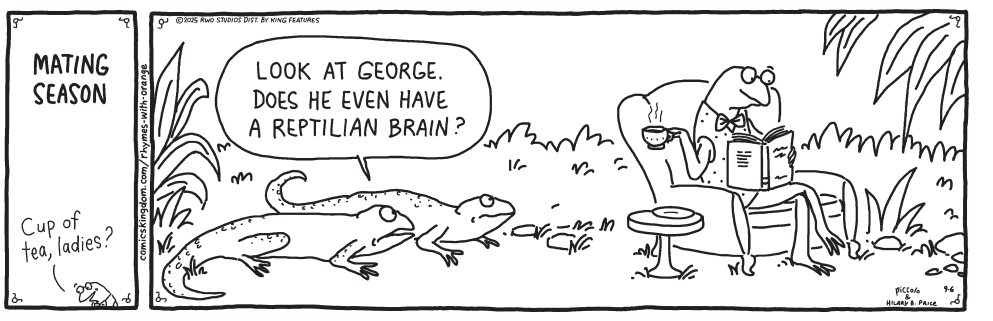
BIZARRO

Wayno & Piraro 9-6-25
©2025 Bizarro Studios
BIZARRO.COM
OUTLO
FISCAL OUTL
Yes, I can assure you that the pie charts in this presentation are all gluten-free.
Dist. by King Features

BEETLE BAILEY

GO ON, SARGE! WE DID IT!
IT'S NOT THAT HIGH!
SPLASH
©2025 Comicana, Inc. Distributed by King Features Syndicate.
WE'D BETTER SCRAM BEFORE HE COMES TO!
GREG+MORT WALKER 9/6

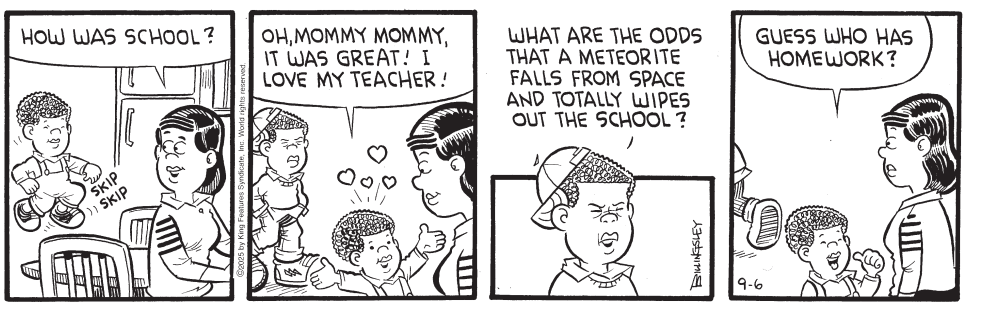
RHYMES WITH ORANGE


MATING SEASON
Cup of tea, ladies?
©2025 RWO STUDIOS DIST. BY KING FEATURES
comicskingdom.com/rhymes-with-orange
LOOK AT GEORGE. DOES HE EVEN HAVE A REPTILIAN BRAIN?
PICCOLO & HILARY B. PRICE 9-6

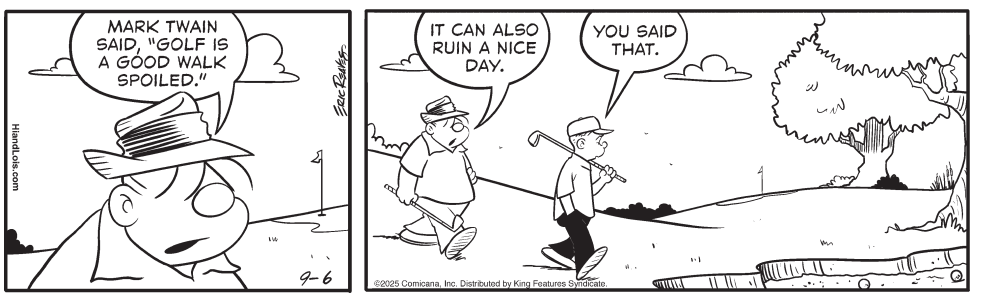
BLONDIE

TOOTSIE KEEPS HARPING ON ME TO PAINT THE SHED...SHE SAID SHE'S TIRED OF LOOKING AT IT
YOU SHOULD JUST PICK UP A BRUSH AND DO IT
© 2025 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World Rights reserved
HEY, WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON HERE, ANYWAY?
NO ONE'S
9-6
www.Blondie.com
I'M JUST TIRED OF LOOKING AT IT, TOO!
MARSHALL

CURTIS


HOW WAS SCHOOL?
SKIP SKIP
©2025 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved
OH, MOMMY MOMMY, IT WAS GREAT! I LOVE MY TEACHER!
WHAT ARE THE ODDS THAT A METEORITE FALLS FROM SPACE AND TOTALLY WIPES OUT THE SCHOOL?
TIMMERSLEY
GUESS WHO HAS HOMEWORK?
9-6

HI & LOIS


MARK TWAIN SAID, "GOLF IS A GOOD WALK SPOILED."
HiandLois.com
9-6
IT CAN ALSO RUIN A NICE DAY.
YOU SAID THAT.
©2025 Comicana, Inc. Distributed by King Features Syndicate.

PARDON MY PLANET

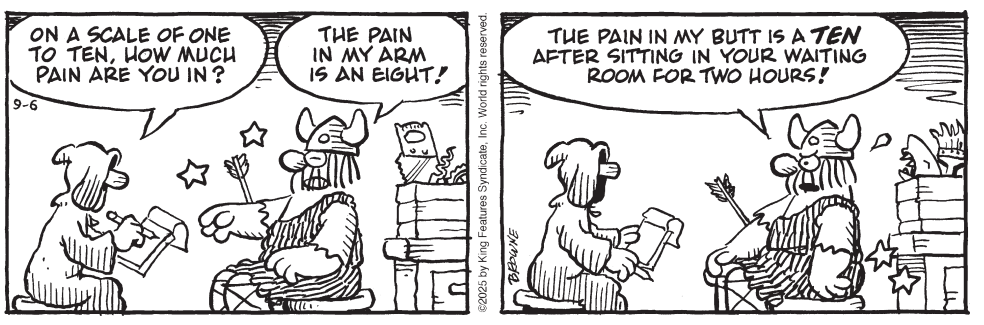
ZITS

MOM, HAVE YOU EVER HAD ONE OF THOSE DAYS WHEN YOU JUST NEED SOMETHING...
zitscomics.com
...LIKE A HUG...
...FROM A SUPERMODEL?
9-6
©2025 ZITS Partnership. Dist. by King Features

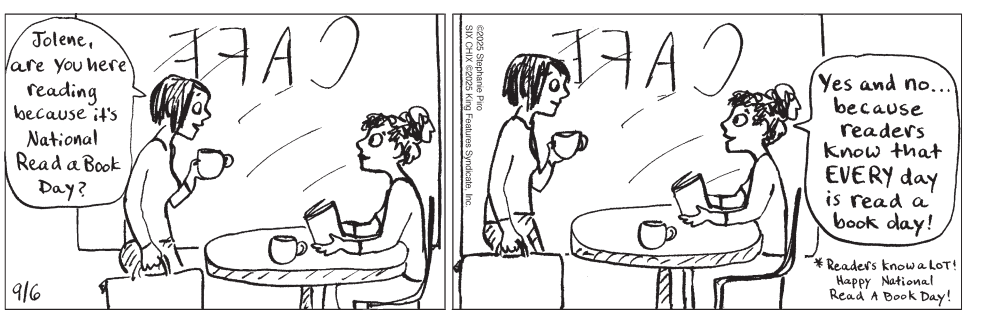
DUMPLINGS

DANI, LET'S GO SWIMMING!
9/6
UH...THE POOL'S CLOSED.
WHAT?!
©2025 DUMPLINGS
DIST. BY KING FEATURES
THE POOL'S CLOSED FOR THE SEASON.
VAN ACKER
CLOSED FOR THE SEASON?! HOW CAN THEY BE CLOSED FOR THE SEASON?!
OH, GOD - PLEASE DON'T BE TALKING ABOUT THE ICE CREAM SHOP!

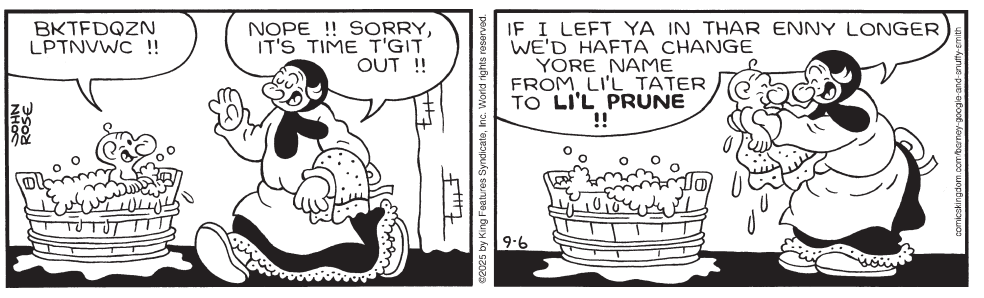
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE


ON A SCALE OF ONE TO TEN, HOW MUCH PAIN ARE YOU IN?
9-6
THE PAIN IN MY ARM IS AN EIGHT!
©2025 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.
THE PAIN IN MY BUTT IS A TEN AFTER SITTING IN YOUR WAITING ROOM FOR TWO HOURS!
BROOME

SIX CHIX


Jolene, are you here reading because it's National Read a Book Day?
9/6
©2025 Stephanie Bos. Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.
Yes and no... because readers know that EVERY day is read a book day!
*Readers know a LOT! Happy National Read A Book Day!

BARNEY GOOGLE AND SNUFFY SMITH


BKTFDQZN LPTNVWC !!
NOPE !! SORRY, IT'S TIME T'GIT OUT !!
JOHN ROSE
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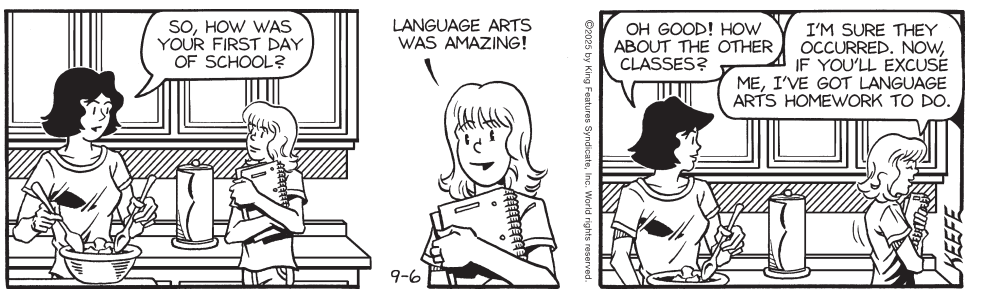
IF I LEFT YA IN THAR ENNY LONGER WE'D HAFTA CHANGE YORE NAME FROM LI'L TATER TO LI'L PRUNE !!
9-6
comicskingdom.com/barney-google-and-snuffy-smith

SALLY FORTH


SO, HOW WAS YOUR FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL?
LANGUAGE ARTS WAS AMAZING!
9-6
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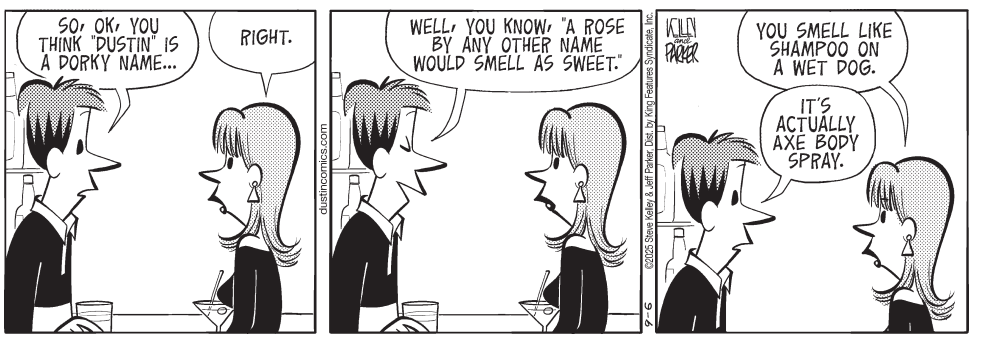
OH GOOD! HOW ABOUT THE OTHER CLASSES?
I'M SURE THEY OCCURRED. NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'VE GOT LANGUAGE ARTS HOMEWORK TO DO.
KEEFE

DUSTIN


SO, OK, YOU THINK "DUSTIN" IS A DORKY NAME...
RIGHT.
dustincomics.com
WELL, YOU KNOW, "A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME WOULD SMELL AS SWEET."
9-6
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MUTTS

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To all persons, including whose address is unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following: TAKE NOTICE: Melissa Mashak has filed a petition for name change. A name change hearing will be held on September 25th at 9:00 AM at 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085 in Courtroom 327 Via Zoom (meeting ID:623-630-9245 before Judge Paul Jancha to change the name Lucy Mae Pugh to Lucy Mae Mashak.

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7528-316782

Niles Daily Star:
Aug. 30 and Sept. 6, 2025
SALE 09.18.25

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF SELF STORAGE SALE

Please take notice Aloha Storage located at 3001 South 11th Street, Niles, MI, 49120 intends to hold an Auction of storage units in default of payment. The sale will occur at the facility on 9/20/2025 at 12:00 PM. Unless stated otherwise the description of the contents are household goods, furnishings and garage essentials. Unit #K010. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice.
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Niles' big, experienced OL ready for heavy lifting

By MAXWELL HARDEN
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NILES — The Niles football program is amidst its most successful stretch in school history and its offensive line has been a key reason why.

The Vikings have fielded strong, physical offensive lines ever since head coach Scot Shaw took over the program in 2021 and this year's unit – featuring tight end Max Rucker (6-0, 200), right tackle Trenton Scott (6-2, 290), right guard Brandon Hamilton (6-0, 250), center Shane Barber (6-0, 240), left guard Chase Brawley (6-2, 280), left tackle Ian Williams (6-0, 240) and tight end Jayelin Vawter (6-6, 245) has the strength, athleticism and experience to be considered one of the best in the state.

"It means a lot [to have this offensive line]," Shaw said. "It means a back can make a mistake and he can still get yards because those guys up front are plowing a way for them."

"I feel like we've got a point to prove this year," Hamilton said. "After all that success this year, we really wanna come out hard. We're going to make sure to come out against St. Joe to prove a point."

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Niles' offensive line consisting of tight end Max Rucker, right tackle Trenton Scott, right guard Brandon Hamilton, center Shane Barber, left guard Chase Brawley, left tackle Evan Williams, and tight end Jayelin Vawter has the strength, athleticism and experience to be considered one of the best in the state.

Proving doubters wrong

Despite coming off the most successful season in program history, Niles' linemen are not patting themselves on the back for a job well done. In fact, the entire unit attacked offseason lifts and workouts, fueled by what they see as unfinished business. Rucker and Brawley fought valiantly in Niles' 35-6 loss to Goodrich in the title game, the only game in which the Vikings were out-physicaled at the point of attack. Scott, Hamilton, Barber and Williams, all starters on the offensive line when the 2024 season began, were forced to watch the biggest game in Niles football history from the Ford Field sidelines after suffering season-ending injuries at various points during the season.

"Obviously, it hurt a little bit because it's always been my dream, our team's, everybody's dream to go play at Ford Field under all the lights and stuff," Hamilton said. "But it also shows that you need all 11 people to win a football game and just doing your role, even if you get injured, coaching up, filling in for the people that are filling in for you. That's really what we learned."

"I think it motivated us in the off-season after getting hurt to get back and wanting more," Barber added.

Vawter, who transferred to Niles last year after football season, has bonded with his teammates and hopes to help them reach the Division 3 championship game. For this line, 2025 is all about redemption.

"I think since the winter, we've been wanting to get back to the state championship and to prove everybody that's ever doubted us wrong," Vawter said. "I'm happy to be a part of this team and make a new family. These are my guys. I think we all fight for each other very hard, and we respect everything each other has to give. We play ball as a team. It's not just one player and we just try to give our all every time we step on the field."

'You're fighting for your brothers'

The Vikings have established a reputation for being a physical team that wears its opponents down with its combination of power and speed. For the lineman,

"I think you just have to be aggressive as soon as you step on the field," Scott said. "You're fighting for your brothers. I like to say that we like to fight and die beside each other. We get off the ball hard, and play aggressively. We're with each other every play; we see one person go down, we're with them picking them back up and just moving on to the next play. With everything we know, we're just all together as one."

"Our message is, it's on us," Williams added. "We're gonna stay low, we're gonna hit you hard. We're gonna make sure our running back doesn't get touched and we like going downhill and hitting people."

Team chemistry has been a key component of Niles' success up front, with several players having played together since their youth football days. The unit has built a bond that transcends the confines of the football field.

"It's very important," Scott said. "Me and Max have played together since we were eight years old on the same team, playing since we were like six, seven years old," Scott said. "You have that chemistry built up throughout the years, and then you're gonna come out here and expect the person next to you to know what you're gonna do and they're gonna help you do it because you've been doing it for all these years."

"The chemistry is big," Hamilton added. "We hang out outside of this. We're close friends, so I know the person next to me is gonna die for me, basically," Hamilton said. "I put my body on the line for them and that's how it should be."

A seasoned offensive line is just what the Vikings need as true freshman Will Turnbull takes over for Talen Bennett as starting quarterback. Niles' offensive line aims to keep his jersey clean this year.

"We just gotta do all of our assignments, because if we do our assignments and the holes are wide open for him, we can make it easy on him just by doing what we need to do," Rucker said. "He's gonna have a whole lot of pressure on him as a freshman QB but it's on us just to keep him safe, get him through, and that's how we're gonna win," Scott added.

New division, same goals

The Vikings surprised many across the state by making it to the state championship game last year. This year, the offensive line is determined to make it back and finish the job – this time in Division 3, where perennial powers like Detroit Martin Luther King, DeWitt, Warren De La Salle Collegiate and defending champion Zeeland West await.

"It's going to take a lot of dedication," Scott said. "We've been wanting this all winter long. We've just been talking about getting back to Ford Field. Even though we're in a new division, it's not gonna change us. We're just gonna have to set the tempo week one. We're just focused on winning week one and then we're gonna focus on week two and then the conference, and then once that hits playoffs, then we'll dedicate it to get back to Ford Field under those lights."

"Team leadership," Brawley said. "We need our leaders to step up and be leaders."

"We can't let off the gas at all," Vawter added. "We shove it down their throats and just keep on hitting everybody, because eventually everybody's gonna get tired of getting hit, like coach always says, and we're gonna keep on going. I think that's a really good, important part about us that we just don't give up. Since I've been here, I've seen these guys' leadership. They'll do anything for their family and I like the culture we got. It's a statement."

VIKINGS

From page B6

42-yard touchdown pass. An Alex Anderson to-point conversion gave the Vikings a 21-12 lead with 11:52 left in the game. The Vikings would score once more when Alex Anderson scored on a six-yard touchdown run to go up 28-12 with 7:30 remaining.

The Bears would not go down quietly. After Corning went down with an injury, backup Caden LeClear threw a touchdown pass to Nate Schmitt. But the Vikings stepped up and forced a third failed two-point conversion to make it a 28-18 game.

The Vikings leaned on their offensive line to run out the clock and clinch the win, which takes on an added meaning this year as the Vikings move up to Division 3 with St. Joseph and Lakeshore. As the winner of Friday's game, Niles received playoff points that will help them in their quest to host a home game in district play.

"There's a good chance we'll see them again," Shaw said. "They're a good team and this was a good start for us in terms of a barometer about where we are especially, after last year and where our new guys sit because we weren't sure. It's just like I told them, we have a lot of things to clean up but it's a lot easier to clean it up at 1-0 than 0-1."

The Vikings faced Lakeshore on the road Friday night. Visit leaderpub.com for a recap of the game.

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